

LEARNING TO BE NOBLE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

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Learning to Be Noble in the Middle Ages

Moral Education in North-Western Europe

by

CLAUDIA WITTIG

BREPOLS

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Acknowledgements

Nulla enim vitae pars neque publicis neque privatis
neque forensibus neque domesticis in rebus, neque
si tecum agas quid, neque si cum alterum contrahas,
vacare officio potest, in eoque et colendo sita vitae est
honestas omnis et neglegendo turpitudinis.

(Cicero, *De officiis*)

And that's when I first learned about evil. It is built
into the very nature of the universe. Every world
spins in pain. If there is any kind of supreme being,
I told myself, it is up to all of us to become his moral
superior.

(Terry Pratchett, *Unseen Academicals*)

In many ways, I have always been interested in questions of morality. The ability of humankind to commit the greatest atrocities but also to make the greatest sacrifices for what is considered good has always fascinated me. When I became a historian, I began to understand how long humans have pondered the question of what was 'right' and what was 'wrong' and how a person could learn to reliably tell one from the other.

To high medieval society, this question was at least as important as any other, but what makes research on this period especially interesting is that this is the point at which morality becomes a defining quality for a social group, who consequently need to learn about virtues and manners and in the process take part in renegotiating and shaping what morality means in their time. This moment in time not only shapes views on morality in the Western world for centuries to come but also influences the self-fashioning and hierarchical dominance of an entire social class — the nobility. I wrote this book to explore how this happened and I am excited to share my findings with my readers.

No academic book is ever written without the implicit and explicit contribution of many people. This book — especially since it was finished

during a pandemic — is no exception. I would like to thank Guy Carney and everyone at Brepols for their patience and guidance. This book found its perfect home in the *Disputatio* series. My first explorations of the topic were guided by my PhD supervisors, Lars Boje Mortensen and Norbert Kössinger. The fact that I could begin and complete my work was thanks to a Marie Curie Fellowship with the FWO that allowed me to dedicate most of my time to this research. Jeroen Deploige was an invaluable help in writing the grant proposal and provided me with a welcoming environment at the Henri Pirenne Institute of the University of Ghent. Here, I had the most productive conversations with my colleagues, but I consider myself particularly lucky to have shared my office with such intelligent and helpful people. Frederick Buylaert kindly encouraged exchanges with his team and contributed to the overall success of my endeavour with excellent ideas and his great generosity. Many inspiring conversations over coffee helped me put my research in perspective and I owe a lot to Micol Long, Brianne Dolce, Jan Dumolyn, Marta Bigus, Geert-Jan van de Voorde, and the wonderful Ysaline Bourguine de Meder. Among this excellent group, my greatest thanks go to Erika Graham-Goering who was always available to bounce ideas off and to discuss the pitfalls of historical research in general and the finer points of Old French in particular.

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None of my work would have been possible without the unconditional trust and support of my family. My parents, Monika and Martin Wittig, have always encouraged me in my pursuits and took great interest in my field of study. Their support, financial and moral, meant that I could embark on the risky journey that is an academic career. My siblings and their families — Stephan, Carina, Sandra, Carsten, Cynthia, Maja, Egon, Clara, and Lena — have been there for me when some real life was desperately needed. I cannot write of my family without mentioning Claudia

Trojandt, whose loyalty and friendship has helped me keep perspective almost all my life.

Finally, my husband, Michele Campopiano, has supported me in more ways than I can mention. He believed that I could write a meaningful book in moments when I did not and he has read every line I have written with admirable patience. Our discussions over morning coffee have more than once brought me entirely new insights and his great knowledge of history, literature, philosophy, and a range of languages has helped me tremendously on every step of the way. I'm more than grateful that he has been with me on this journey.

Introduction

Nobility and Morality in the High Middle Ages

Moral superiority is a key element of aristocratic self-legitimation. All throughout history, the social elites have emphasized that they were in one way or another, by the standards of their respective societies, 'better' than other classes (a notion reflected in the use of the Modern English expression 'my betters' for those higher up in the hierarchy). Aristocrats have presented themselves as the group with the highest morals, who sustain the values of their world, best represent its ideals, and are therefore best suited to lead the rest of the people. This superiority has also generally been regarded as heritable.¹ During the thousand years the medieval period commonly covers, we find a striking continuity in the families who occupy the thrones, govern the largest principalities, provide bishops, archbishops, and popes, intermarry, and thus keep their claims to power safely within their closed ranks — with few exceptions and despite the various social, political, and economic changes they lived through.² Throughout this period, the inherent superiority of the aristocracy was a feature of the sources that discuss their status; however, it was in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that morality and superior conduct became significant factors in aristocratic class consciousness.³ This shift in noble self-representation becomes visible in the obsession with morality and the increasing codification of good conduct at many European courts. Tracts on the morality of the kings were written, quickly translated into the vernaculars, and copied for the use of princes and the lesser lords. On the political stage in the high Middle Ages, the rules of interaction were largely the same all across Western Europe and beyond because they were based on the same values, the same ideals, and the same notions on the place of nobility in society. These norms and values had to be taught and learned; they were distributed across a large geographic area and they were adopted (and sometimes adapted) by a diverse, if rather closed, social group across a large geographic area. They applied in different socio-political circumstances and to the various ranks within this group:

¹ Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires*, p. 169.

² Barthélemy, *La mutation de l'an mil a-t-elle eu lieu?*.

³ Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*, p. 3.

not only kings and princes, but also lesser lords, knights, and courtiers subscribed to these claims to moral superiority and used them as a means to social improvement, heightened reputation, and share in the prestige that they conferred on those who participated in aristocratic society.⁴

This book explores the teaching of norms and values across north-western Europe and interrogates their role in the shaping of nobility as a social group. It also examines how these norms and values might help to integrate groups on the periphery of noble society into their cosmos. Specifically, this book is concerned with the teaching of norms and values to the lay aristocracy, including its lower ranks. It looks into the different ways the aristocracy learned about morality and good conduct, depending on their social position at the courts, or even far from them. Since the majority of such instruction had taken place through direct conversations and is thus lost to us, and since chroniclers rarely comment on the practicalities of moral education, this study is based on the textual witnesses from that time that allow us insights not only into what was learned but also *how* it was learned. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a wealth of didactic writing was produced that responded to the need to educate lay people in a morality specifically tailored for a life in the world. Initially written by bishops and high-ranking clerics in Latin for the education of royalty, soon vernacular texts conveyed moral education for lay aristocracy too.⁵ These vernacular texts were sometimes addressed to kings and princes but just as often to knights and simple courtiers. Some of these texts — whether translations from Latin sources or original compositions — became extremely popular and are transmitted in manuscripts whose numbers exceed by far those of courtly romances or love poetry. Didactic texts of this sort are found in courtly literature or historiography as well as codices transmitting *doctrina* or lyric poetry. French translations of Latin didactic texts could circulate more widely than their originals and could themselves inspire adaptations and translations into other languages. Moral education created a strong sense of community on the level of the European aristocracy, not only by distributing the same norms and values but also by promoting a shared learning experience. This book argues that this shared experience played a vital part in the shaping of nobility in the high medieval period.

The notion of ‘nobility’ and the privileges connected with it were subject to change in the Middle Ages. Though there is no definition of nobility that applies to the whole of Europe over the entire period, certain factors and developments can be taken as characteristic. ‘Nobility’ in this context refers to a social group with access to a number of (varying) privileges through birth. The status is a legally defined one, in contrast

⁴ Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*, p. 13.

⁵ For an overview of such moral tracts see Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, pp. 307–14.

to 'aristocracy', which is a sociological category. The latter refers to a 'dominant group in society, which drew its importance from its economic and social weight'.⁶ Several moments, with a focus on different criteria, have been suggested as the birth of nobility.⁷ Thus nobility is in the process of re-fashioning itself, in a process of normative distinction. This phenomenon is concerned with negotiations of identity and strategies of social legitimation, all of which happen in a discursive process that engages in a normative establishment of nobility as a morally superior social group, as I will argue in this book.

The texts analysed in this study represent only fragments of this discourse. They cannot stand in for the significantly larger part of the discourse to which we have no access because it took place in spoken conversation or in texts now lost. However, the texts I discuss in this book are particularly relevant to the study of the formation and education of nobility as they are prescriptive and normative, and thus explicitly aim to influence the discourse of which they are part. They allow for a better understanding of which discursive fields were part of the larger discourse on nobility, which tensions arose when different discourses were in competition or were negotiated within one text, but also which social groups had access to and participated in the discourse. To establish the context for these discussions, it is important to acknowledge the profound changes in the eleventh and twelfth centuries that prepared the ground for these developments and occasioned a new appreciation for morality and learning in the secular elites in Europe.

Socio-Cultural Shifts in the High Middle Ages

From the eleventh century, an increasing number of noble laymen became not only readers, but also patrons of literature. They were often not familiar with Latin, and vernacular writing catered for their need for entertainment, self-representation and information. At the same time, the necessity of teaching Christian values to lay people was increasingly discussed among clergymen. These and other socio-cultural developments gave rise to the

6 Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*, p. 3.

7 Nobility as a princely ideology in connection with the concept of chivalry was discussed by Oschema, 'Noblesse et chevalerie comme idéologie princière?'. Nobility as identity, consisting of chivalry, lordship and ancestry was placed in eleventh- and twelfth-century France by Contamine, *La noblesse au royaume de France*. Questions of noble conduct, representation and legitimation are collected in the volume *Nobilitas*, ed. by Oexle and Paravicini. Based on ideological aspects, Lubich, 'Tugendadel' also argues that a nobility as a social group existed since the Carolingian Empire but reaches a different ethical identity in the twelfth century. According to Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*, p. 3 in the High Middle Ages, aristocracy becomes a 'self-conscious hierarchical social class', that is, nobility.

use of the vernacular languages for literary discourses, often discourses which were previously only written in Latin or took place in oral form.⁸ One of the earliest discourses in vernacular writing is moral instruction, often in the form of poetry. A variety of texts from this 'genre' was produced from the beginning of the twelfth century, and soon this type of literature flourished at the courts of England and Germany. The need for this kind of literature arose partly from a deeply felt insecurity, on spiritual, social, and political levels. The new patrons of this literature have been titled the 'restless generation' and the vernacular texts aim to offer orientation and guidance.⁹ What has become known as the 'Renaissance of the Twelfth Century' was a period of manifold political, social, economic, and spiritual developments which deeply influenced cultural life.¹⁰ Though the term suggests a teleological development of social structures in the direction of the Renaissance in the early modern period, the processes were in fact much less unambiguous and were perceived as a crisis rather than a renaissance.¹¹ A series of events which had already been set in motion in the eleventh century has to be considered in order to understand the European nobility's increasing need for both literature and legitimation. The process of vernacularization in Western Europe has not yet been illuminated in its entirety; it seems to have taken place in a complex net of socio-cultural and political transformations, some of which are particularly relevant for the creation of nobility at the same time. Some of these developments shall be outlined briefly. Since the eleventh century, Europe had experienced a rapid rise in its population, which triggered new developments in crafts and trade.¹² New trade routes were founded, markets were expanded inside and outside of Europe, and monetary business began with the increased travel activity of tradesmen all over Europe, with the most prominent traders from northern Italian cities.¹³ Through the rise of the cities, an increased social mobility was made possible, which had been unknown

8 For a discussion of the general tendencies in processes of vernacularization, cf. Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men*, chapter 11: 'The Vernacularization of Europe'. Lars Boje Mortensen discussed Pollock's model and noted that it 'exaggerates the impact of literary practices on the ideological and structural make-up of the European societies in question', Mortensen, 'Latin as Vernacular'. In this book, vernacular texts are regarded as parts of a larger discourse which takes place in spoken language, Latin writing, and vernacular writing, taking a different shape in each of these modes of expression.

9 Vollmann-Profe and Vollmann, 'Die unruhige Generation', p. 20.

10 Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*.

11 Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century* engages critically with the notion of a twelfth-century renaissance which he considers from the perspective of government. The term coined by Haskins is mainly applied to the rediscovery of Latin learning and legal texts. However, Bisson argues that government and administration were rather in a process of completely new orientation with stages of disruption.

12 Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution*, pp. 27–30.

13 Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution*, pp. 97–112.

since antiquity. In Germany, *ministeriales* became influential at the courts with the shift from interpersonal lordship to territorial power. Trained clerks were needed for the administration of the land and their service was required in military enterprises. With the rise of the originally unfree *ministeriales* into important offices and their amalgamation with the lower nobility, noble identity needed a new foundation.¹⁴

At the same time, new cathedral schools developed to cater for the rising need for trained officials. In France and Italy, the first universities were founded, where Roman and canon law or theology were taught, with the liberal arts as the basis of learning. Among the intellectual developments that occurred in these new institutions of learning was scholasticism. With its method of *sic et non*, dialectical problem-solving, and its disputations, new discourses entered the realm of Latin learning and Christian dogmatic.¹⁵ The rediscovery of Aristotelian writings also brought a new impetus for discourses in ethics and moral philosophy.¹⁶

In post-Conquest England, a new cultural elite had taken over to whom the achievements of English literature were alien and which connected strongly to the court culture of the Continent. They, too, needed legitimization of their assumed role as rulers of the country, while at the same time trying to participate in the discourses on noble ideals held in France and Normandy.¹⁷ Feudalism in England, nonetheless, took very different forms from that of France, and social stratification in England was more complex.¹⁸ Thus, it is even more important to look at the discursive practices which were part of the creation of nobility as a cultural elite. Through contact with English literature, Anglo-Norman French soon became a literary language that could cater for the cultural and intellectual needs of the new ruling class.¹⁹ The writing of conduct literature and its import from the Continent are both indicative of the relevance of these ideas for the nobility in England.

All over Europe, in the aftermath of the first crusades and the *Pax Dei* movement,²⁰ a new *militia Christi* had developed, which promoted an image of the noble warrior who fought in the service of God.²¹ Ratified by the pope and rewarded with indulgences, fighting against the enemies of the Church had brought honour, salvation, and land. The ideal of the

14 Bosl, "Noble unfreedom", pp. 291–311. See also Freed, 'Reflections on the Medieval German Nobility', pp. 553–75.

15 Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, pp. 239–43 and 278–91.

16 Bejczy, *Virtue Ethics in the Middle Ages*.

17 Hollister, 'Anglo-Norman Political Culture', pp. 13–14.

18 Clanchy, *England and its Rulers*, pp. 60–64. See also Crouch, *The English Aristocracy*, pp. 37–65.

19 Howlett, *The English Origins of Old French Literature*.

20 On the *Pax dei*-movement, cf. Goetz, 'Gottesfriede und Gemeindebildung', pp. 122–44.

21 Asbridge, *The First Crusade*, pp. 40–82.

Christian warrior became part of the discourse of the social function of nobility and its legitimation. Christian dogma and a pre-existing warrior ethos merged and the fighting elite of Western Europe found expression in the ideal of the code of chivalry.²² This new ideal was supposed to tame the use of violence and direct it against the enemies of Christendom, rather than against neighbouring noble families as in the endless petty feuds of the tenth century. Rituals of girding were celebrated in church, and clerics invested young noblemen with their swords, thus firmly integrating them into the structure of the Church, formulating a canon of duties and conduct for their newly established offices.²³ Princely families celebrated the *adoubement* of their sons in large, magnificent feasts, using the new knighthood to increase their reputation and esteem, as in the famous Imperial Diet of Mainz held by Frederick I Barbarossa in 1184 on the occasion of the dubbing of his sons.²⁴

The Church reform had fostered a new kind of lay piety all over Europe.²⁵ New monasteries were founded and equipped by noble families. Lay brothers, many of them unlearned noblemen, associated themselves with the monks. The consequences of the Investiture Controversy had influenced both England and the Empire, leading to a separation of power into the spiritual and the worldly sword — a notion that was not uncontested.²⁶ Reflections on the division of power can be found, for instance, in contemporary chronicles, such as the *Kaiserchronik* or the *Gesta Frederici* by Otto von Freising.

Duby argued that there had been intense discourse about what eventually became known as the three orders; the division of medieval society into those who work, those who pray, and those who fight. In his *Les Trois Ordres ou l'Imaginaire du féodalisme*, he argues that this division did not arise as a natural concept, nor did it go uncontested, but that it was negotiated as a part of a new legitimation of different groups in society and their function for the whole of the Christian world.²⁷

For the European nobility, several of these influences coincided and resulted in the need for new foundations for the legitimation of their status and new forms of self-representation.²⁸ The traditional spheres of the aristocracy, warfare, and government of land were complemented by

22 Keen, *Chivalry*.

23 Keen, *Chivalry*, p. 23. Such a ritual is described in the poem *Ordene de chevalerie*, including a hermeneutic interpretation of its elements.

24 Lubich, 'Das Kaiserliche, das Höfische und der Konsens', pp. 277–94.

25 Cowdrey, *Popes and Church Reform in the 11th Century*, pp. 321–52 on the Anglo-Norman situation, and Goetz, *Kirchenreform und Investiturstreit*, pp. 76–110 with a focus on the Empire.

26 Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy*.

27 Duby, *Les trois ordres*.

28 Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*.

the dissemination and protection of Christianity. The courts became new centres of cultural life as noble families began to attract and support artists. In the attempt to distance themselves from the lower ranks, the nobility was looking for new ways to express their superior status and justify their social privileges. Both high and low nobility used the opportunities of the new court culture to increase their status, often straining their resources beyond measure in their attempts to keep up. The adoption of shared moral values and cultural norms as well as competition for territorial power were integrated into the new discourse on nobility. Didactic literature, now in the patron's respective vernacular languages, was one of the ways in which this discourse was led.²⁹

The insecurity and their quest for guidance in social and spiritual matters resulted in a kind of literature which is very much a symptom of the developments described. Moral-didactic literature offered counsel and advice on a just and meaningful life in the world, while accounting for the realities of life and court and even aiming to be entertaining and pleasant. These texts no longer promoted a *contemptus mundi* attitude, as the earliest vernacular writings had, but presented guidelines for a life in the world while still being in accordance with Christian values.

Learned Discourses of Virtues and Values in the West

When medieval authors engaged in moral discourses, they looked back to a long tradition and could base their arguments on the works of the greatest classical thinkers and the authority of the Church Fathers. Debates about the human capacity to commit to the Good had since Plato been connected to the concept of virtue. The term has somewhat gone out of fashion in the modern period,³⁰ perhaps the concept behind the term is less clear-cut than those of 'value' or 'norm'. Medieval authors and their classical predecessors defined the term differently in different contexts. The Latin *virtus* is related to *vir* (man) and in the classical period it could both mean the masculine quality of prowess and the philosophical concept of moral excellence. In the latter sense, it was a translation of the Greek *areté* and through Latin translations of Greek philosophical texts the term penetrated Christian ethics. This semantic field of moral excellence remained dominant when the term was translated into the Romance vernaculars. Similarly, the Middle High German equivalent *tugen* is a nominalization of the verb *tugen*, 'to be useful', or 'to be capable', so that

29 Cf. Bumke, *Mäzene im Mittelalter* for a comprehensive study of German patrons, and Short, 'Patrons and Polyglots' for the Anglo-Norman situation.

30 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 17–23.

the noun must often be translated as ‘aptitude’ or, indeed, ‘prowess’. Under the influence of Latin ‘*virtus*’, it gained a new, supplementary meaning of moral excellence as well. However, *virtus* was not only ambivalent in its semantics but also in the way it related to human nature, a question that was much debated among medieval thinkers.

The twelfth century was pivotal in the development of medieval virtue ethics from several perspectives. One impetus came from the renewed reception and appreciation of classical moral philosophy and learning. Cicero’s *De inventione* and Macrobius’ *Comentarii in Somnium Scipionis* were widely used for the classification and definition of the Cardinal Virtues.³¹ They were valued not in spite of their pre-Christian origins, but because of them. The integration of the classical Roman heritage into Christian moral philosophy posed some challenges to Christian authors but it also offered added value: the historicity of the classical *auctoritates* increased their legitimacy, and the high morality of pagan authors implied an imperative for the Christian to surpass them in ethically correct behaviour. It was also during the twelfth century that the classical origins of Christian moral thought were recognized — early medieval moralists were often oblivious to the classical antecedents of the virtues they propagated.³² Now authors actively engaged with this fact, rejecting or integrating classical perspectives on morality, or elaborating on it — the analogy of the dwarves who can see farther as they stand on the shoulders of giants captures this sentiment most concisely. John of Salisbury, in his *Metalogicon*, attributes the quote to Bernard of Chartres. Bernard, a neo-platonist, used this analogy to describe the learning at medieval cathedral schools. By the twelfth century, these were still the only real institutions of learning that had the veneration of antique knowledge built into their very foundations.³³ Bernard’s work inspired both his student, William of Conches, and John of Salisbury, two central figures in the distribution of moral thought in the twelfth century, the latter actively made this knowledge available to non-clerical audiences. His *Policraticus*, like the *Metalogicon* dedicated to Thomas Becket, discusses the role of morality for the statesman, another characteristic development of the twelfth century. Discourses on morality were carried out no longer only among the clergy but they became central in the self-fashioning of the secular elites as well. If indeed William of Conches was the author of the *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, which became the source for a vast array of vernacular translations, his role in the distribution of classical moral thought to the secular elites is even more important.

31 Bejczy, *The Cardinal Virtues*, p. 69.

32 Bejczy, *The Cardinal Virtues*, p. 70.

33 Cf. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, p. 203.

A new development in the domain of moral philosophy in the twelfth century was the focus on intentionality. The importance of intention was not actually new: already Augustine emphasized the role of will and motives in his 'moral psychology'.³⁴ While in early medieval ethics the authority of Gregory the Great promoted humility as the central virtue, charity became the foremost virtue in many twelfth-century texts, as Augustine had set out. The works of Boethius and Peter Lombard were among the most-read of the period and both integrated Augustinian positions on the virtues.³⁵ According to Augustine, virtues were infused by grace and they would survive in the afterlife.³⁶ The most radical and best-known representative of these philosophers concerned with the role of intention was certainly Peter Abelard. His *Scito te ipsum* had a great influence on the learned discourse on vices and virtues, and was meant as a *Ethica nostra*, a Christian ethical conception to supplement the classical ethic philosophy.³⁷ Abelard's greatest opponent was Bernard of Clairvaux, who rejected Abelard's approach to logical discussion of the most profound theological truths, such as the Trinity, which, to Bernard, were a matter of belief rather than of academic curiosity.³⁸ Bernard had a significant impact on lay religiosity; however, this was not so much because of his ethics, but were rather the result of his promotion of the Crusades. Where Bernard had preached, hundreds left for the Holy Land, kings and princes among them.³⁹ His treatise *Liber ad milites templi de laude novae militiae*, originally written for the moral exhortation of the newly-found Order of the Knights Templar in Jerusalem, arguably influenced the image of the knight in the twelfth century as it extended the notion of the *militia Christi* to those fighting in defence of Christendom and thus made crusading part of divine service, tremendously raising the esteem of the knightly profession.⁴⁰ In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the chivalric ideology would develop its distinct form and become an integral part of the repertoire of the lay elites to express status and reputation.

An issue that occupies these great thinkers is the question of how virtue can be gained. Can it be achieved by 'natural' means such as personal effort and the intention to do good and improve oneself, or

34 Pranger, 'Medieval Ethics and the Illusion of Interiority', p. 23.

35 Bejczy, 'Introduction', p. 2.

36 Bejczy, 'The Problem of Natural Virtue', p. 134.

37 See the comprehensive study by De Vecchi, *L'etica o 'Scito te ipsum' di Pietro Abelardo*.

38 Aubé, *Saint Bernard de Clairvaux*, p. 408.

39 For example, King Louis IX of France supposedly took the cross after he had heard Bernard preaching at the Council of Vézelay, as transmitted in the chronicle of William of Tyre; Willelmi Tyrensis Archiepiscopi, *Chronicon*, ed. by Huygens, trans. in William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, trans. by Krey.

40 Barber, *The New Knighthood*, p. 44. Aubé, *Saint Bernard de Clairvaux*. On the development of the chivalric ideal in the context of the Crusades cf. Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*.

was it God's grace that granted it? The weight seemed, in the twelfth century, to shift to the side of individual effort,⁴¹ a perspective that may be connected to the cultural development sometimes called 'medieval humanism',⁴² which allowed for the possibility — even if only theoretical — of improvement and perfection in mankind. The question of how virtue could be achieved was connected to the question of whether non-Christians, too, could achieve such a state and if this meant that they could gain access to salvation. This was particularly relevant because, as mentioned above, awareness grew that the foundations of the Christian values were of pagan origin. Could the pagan *auctoritates* even know about virtue, and if they could, what did this imply for the Christians?

Many of these discourses filtered into lay circles as well, be it that they were discussed in Latin works that envisioned at least partly a lay audience, such as the *Policraticus*, be it in vernacular texts that were written by authors well-versed in scholarly and monastic discussions on the topic. With the latter, the question of attaining Christian virtues in a secular life became more pressing. Already authors like Walter Map had pointed out the dangers of courtly life for the clerics who jeopardized their eternal souls with vanities, power struggles, and flattery.⁴³ But if the dangers were so pressing for them, how could laymen even hope for redemption? Or was a good life possible for kings, princes, knights, and courtiers, as well? Authors who wrote for lay audiences answered these questions — more or less tentatively — in the affirmative. Laymen had a role to play in the order of the world, and it was these authors who would set out the rules which needed to be followed to ensure this role was fulfilled. Depending on their context, they would integrate the necessities of noble life into their accounts in order to make them more appealing and more applicable. The integration of the famous authors of classical antiquity was a way to secularize moral instruction and increase its prestige. Names such as Cicero and Seneca were sure to attract the audience's attention.

By the thirteenth century, moral philosophy experienced yet another strong impetus which shaped its course as the ethical works of Aristotle became available in Latin (and soon after in vernacular) translations. Not only did they almost cause a schism at the schools and universities, they were either embraced and eagerly studied or banned. They also influenced lay culture a great deal, as the reception of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum* as a mirror of princes in Latin and various vernaculars in the thirteenth century and beyond demonstrates.⁴⁴

41 Bejczy, 'The Problem of Natural Virtue', p. 135.

42 Jaeger, 'Humanism and Ethics at the School of St Victor'.

43 Walter Map, *De nugis curialium*, ed. and trans. by James.

44 Cf. Campopiano, 'Secret Knowledge for Political and Social Harmony', pp. 43–47.

One of the influences that the reception of Aristotle had on the ongoing debate about how virtues are acquired was his concept of *habitus*. Aristotle's concept of *habitus* seems, at first glance, to contradict the Augustinian moment of emotional involvement. Aristotle and his medieval followers were convinced that consistent practice can cause normatively correct behaviour to become 'second nature' (*secunda natura*).⁴⁵ If values are not conveyable by means of didactic efforts, norms are teachable. By adhering to norms, societal values are constantly confirmed and reiterated so that didactics have a stabilizing effect on values nonetheless.

It was Thomas Aquinas who reconciled the Aristotelian notion of *habitus* with the Augustinian perspective of virtue as induced by grace and revealed truth. In his *Summa*, he describes virtue as a *habitus*, i.e. the capability to act well, which is strengthened with every good deed and weakened with any contrary act. Thus virtue is constantly being created through actions that are founded in the belief in the right values. *Virtus* is 'a good quality of mind by which one lives righteously, of which no one can make bad use', and it is also 'a *habitus* which is always for good'.⁴⁶ This means that, according to Thomas, virtues are the interface between norms and values, as they translate the abstract values into action and in the process become properties. The main virtue, in Thomist ethics, is prudence, as moral questions are inevitably complex and often defy easy answers so that the individual must be able to make prudent decisions.⁴⁷ Just as in Aristotle, the pursuit of virtues serves the individual's happiness, which Aristotle defines as the fulfilment of a person's natural potentials in his life (*eudaimonia*).⁴⁸ The full potential that can be achieved through virtue for Thomas, however, extends into the next life. The 'natural', acquired virtues enable a person to lead a good life, but they are insufficient for salvation that can be granted only by the theological, divinely 'infused' virtues, love, hope, and faith, which are necessarily linked to an act of grace.⁴⁹ The final aim, the Higher Good in Thomas' moral ethics, is God.

Understandably, vernacular authors who aimed to convey the essentials of moral philosophy to their lay readers set a different focus. While God remained at the centre of all moral education, the advice was tailored to a life in the world. When Giles of Rome adapted Aristotle's concepts to the education of the king in his *De regimine principum*, the result was a comprehensive work on the various fields of knowledge in which a king

45 Nederman, 'Nature, Ethics and the Doctrine of Habitus', pp. 88–90.

46 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I. II. 55. 4.

47 Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia Libri Ethicorum*, II. 2. See Nelson, *The Priority of Prudence*, pp. 41–66.

48 Szaif, *Gut des Menschen*, pp. 103–05; Irwin, 'Permanent Happiness' Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. and trans. by Bartlett and Collins, 1099a–1100a, pp. 15–18.

49 Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 40–73.

should be instructed and the virtues he needed to govern his estate for the good of all subjects.⁵⁰ This focus on the applicability of the complex theoretical concepts of Morality and Learning was inherent to didactic writing for the aristocracy of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Giles' treatise was widely circulated and translated in various vernaculars.⁵¹ The notion that virtues could (and should) be learned and practised is at the core of all these tracts while the underlying theoretical concepts are often omitted. Nonetheless, we find recourses to these discourses in even the simple vernacular poems on good conduct and sometimes engaging discussion of the roles of virtues in some of the more elaborate vernacular texts. The thought of the great thinkers of Antiquity and the Middle Ages provides the backdrop against which secular moral education was composed.

Moral Discourse in the Vernacular Languages

The discourse on morality and conduct shifted when part of it moved from Latin into the vernacular, from clerical audiences to lay people, from the monasteries to the courts of lords and bishops as it became part of a larger discourse on nobility in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As far as we know, in most if not all cases, the authors of moral-didactic works in both Latin and the vernacular were clerics themselves. However, they seem to have been very familiar with the requirements of their audiences. And this is not surprising, given that a certain number of noble sons enjoyed formal education, mainly in cathedral schools, pursuing a career in the highest ranks of the Church, and many a cleric worked at a secular court and was well acquainted with the needs and wishes of those he wished to educate.⁵² On the basis of their already existing power, as the offspring of the old aristocratic families, with their personal ties, land possession, and military training, noblemen now sought to become the cultural elite, distinct from other members of society by appearance and the practice of their common rituals, which aimed to show their inherent qualities and served as expression of their superior morals and values. Being, as a social group, the 'best' of humankind needed to be expressed in excellent manners, honourable deeds, and a pious life, while still being a successful warrior and just lord. Ideally, noblemen should grant their subjects a good life under their rule and generally serve as a model to everyone else, in order to guarantee a functioning society in accordance with God's will.

⁵⁰ Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum*.

⁵¹ Perret, *Les traductions françaises*.

⁵² Turner, 'Changing Perceptions', pp. 107–17. In general, on the courtly life styles of high-ranking clerics, see Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*.

What this literature can show us is the attempt to reconcile the manifold demands and aspirations of nobility. It provides an inventory of the areas of social practice and conduct that were regarded as most important and points to the values which were part of the self-representation noblemen wanted to produce of themselves and their peers. Criticism in the works can indicate where actual behaviour was found not to be in accordance with the new ideal. Contradictions can indicate competing demands that had to be negotiated. Sources for the texts and authorities cited enable us to see from which neighbouring discourses inspiration was drawn and where ideal behaviour was sought.

The discourse on nobility is not an isolated one. It is connected, overlaps with, absorbs and influences other discourses, such as those on gender, religion, ethics, warfare, and many more. These different discourses are connected each to their own ideals, claims and social practices they promote. They interplay with the overall discourse on nobility on different levels; they may compete or even clash, they can cause tension or redundancies, or they can complement each other. These complex relations become evident in the didactic writing and allow us insights into the role of moral excellence and its learning for the medieval aristocracy.

For the purposes of the broader discussions in this book, I take discourses as groups of statements that deal with the same topic and which seem to produce a similar effect; discourse takes place in all expressions of language, oral or written.⁵³ The discourses of moral and noble behaviour in particular are associated with institutions or social elites, who are authorized to establish the rules and limitations of a discourse. Yet the discourse itself, as much as its participants, determines which statements can be made about a topic and the conditions under which certain statements are considered true and appropriate.⁵⁴ When Foucault introduced the concept of discourse in his *Les mots et les choses* in 1966 he used the term to refer to structures that allow the subjects who participate in the discourse to think, speak, and act according to common principles.⁵⁵ A discourse structures what can be said, how, and by whom and thus enables and constrains statements on a topic at the same time. In his work, Foucault focused on social practices — which work on the basis of language — and distinguished these from other, non-linguistic practices, which he later called ‘dispositif’.⁵⁶ *Dispositif* and discourse are closely connected and together create social reality. In the concept of chivalry, for instance, the connection between military practice and moral discourse results in a

⁵³ Mills, *Discourse*, p. 65.

⁵⁴ Mills, *Discourse*, p. 66.

⁵⁵ Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*.

⁵⁶ Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, vol. 1 : *La volonté de savoir*.

complex ideology that is expressed in various ways in didactic writing, depending on the focus of the author.

Each statement of a discourse is uttered in a structured reality, based on traditions and patterns that are predetermined. Each speech act perpetuates the pre-existing structure, but also participates in its re-creation.⁵⁷ Thus the tendency of moral tracts and didactic writing to convey conventional norms and provide little space for innovation creates stability in the discourse. This stability was actively sought as it connected the discourse with nobility's claim to continuity — the appreciation of classical ethics — and contributed to the stability of social order. Moral discourse was meant to preserve the status quo, not encourage drastic change. Discourses can establish or influence social norms and practices, and they are themselves always products of these norms and practices — as we see in courtly ritual and symbolic communication — since they are based on their own historicity.⁵⁸ The very fact that there is a literature tailored to the needs of noble laymen is based on pre-existing structures of social reality, such as the close connection between the Church and secular lords.

There must therefore be a close connection between discourse and the structures of power that control the discourse.⁵⁹ Subjects who are in a position to participate in a certain discourse are also in a position to shape associated social practices. These positions of influence are social categories that draw their power from a collective recognition of their legitimacy.⁶⁰ Nobility was one such social category, and the positions of power connected with it were very effective. As one of the social groups that shaped the discourse (and was, in return, shaped by it), the nobility could determine who could participate in its representations (e.g. through rules about clothes) and the physical exertion of power (e.g. the right to bear arms) associated with this social class. Finally, as we see in France, they could grant access to the social group and its legal status by ennobling commoners, when it served their needs.⁶¹

The didactic texts in this study represent a part of the discourse. As a group of statements organized in a similar way (precepts in poetic language about morality and conduct) and which serve a similar aim (influencing the behaviour of lay nobility), they are discursive formations. In this book, they are regarded as symptomatic of a discourse that took place in many ways and found expression in other discursive formations closely related to the ones studied here, including Latin moral philosophy, but most of all oral communication, both formal (as in sermons) and infor-

57 Landwehr, *Historische Diskursanalyse*, p. 94.

58 Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir*, p. 37.

59 Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir*.

60 Bourdieu, 'Le sens pratique', p. 47.

61 Barthélemy, 'La cour du prince et l'essor de l'adoubement chevaleresque', p. 157.

mal (such as parents' instruction to their children). Regarding the texts as symptomatic is a valid approach as this broad sample was used over a large geographical area, showing that the texts are strikingly consistent in the main topics and concepts around which they coalesce, the values they promote, and the tensions between competing claims that they aim to resolve. Given the historical and literary contexts and the socio-cultural situation in which the texts can be situated, it is reasonable to regard these discursive formations as a relevant and symptomatic part of the larger discourse.

As the wide distribution and multilingual nature of my main sources implies, a central factor in the period studied in this book is the development of vernacular writing. The languages in which the texts are written are the languages of the respective secular elites. Thus languages, too, play a role in the formation of this elite by means of discursive practices. The choice of language is a social practice in its own right and will be regarded such in this book: didactic writing takes different forms depending on whether it is written in French, Middle English, German, or Latin. The connection between a discourse, the language used to express it, and the social elite who controls the discourse and speaks the language is therefore crucial for this study.

Textual evidence indicates that various developments that took place in Middle High German poetry occur in different forms in French or the Anglo-Norman language community.⁶² Courtly advice, indicating an intended audience of lay nobility, cannot be found in English in the period. Instead, Middle English poetry mostly serves religious instruction and does not explicitly address noble laymen. French texts in England, as well as texts in Flemish, German, and Dutch, reflect a court culture that looked to France for inspiration. In both cultural environments, moral-didactic poetry developed early in the history of the respective vernacular and flourished thereafter. For this reason, a comparative analysis of moral-didactic writing in France, England, and the Empire offers promising insights in the relation between language and discourse, and, on that basis, the creation of nobility as seen through the lens of normative texts.

Research into Medieval Aristocratic Ethics

While the analysis of medieval moral-didactic literature in the vernacular is a developing area of research, the ideals, norms, and values of the medieval period have been the focus of scholarship virtually since research

62 Wogan-Browne, 'What's in a Name', pp. 7–10.

on the Middle Ages began. Chivalry in particular has attracted great attention. Claude-François Menestrier (1631–1705) was the first to define the chivalric ideal as a combination of military practice with social status and moral excellence, in his *Chevalerie ancienne et moderne* (1683).⁶³ In the wake of social and political upheavals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the interest in chivalry increased. Jean-Baptiste de la Curne de Sainte Palaye's *Mémoires sur l'ancienne chevalerie, considérée comme un établissement politique et militaire* (1753) approached the topic from a bourgeois perspective, whereas Edmund Burke's famous lament 'the age of chivalry is gone' reflected his reactionary attitude to the loss of the French monarchy.⁶⁴ The Romantics rediscovered the Middle Ages not just in popular culture, with works such as Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* and Wagner's the *Ring of the Nibelungs*, but also in academic thought. In 1884, Léon Gautier formulated in his 'Ten Commandments of Chivalry' a programme of morals he wished to see reinstated in his own era.⁶⁵ The ambiguity of the concept invited generations of writers to charge it with different meanings, reflecting the values and dilemmas of their respective lifetimes.

The foundations of modern academic research in medieval chivalry go back to the works of Georges Duby, who first described medieval society as a *société chevaleresque*.⁶⁶ His *Les Trois Ordres ou L'Imaginaire du féodalisme*⁶⁷ made the threefold stratification of medieval orders (including the knight) extremely influential, though this was just one of many paradigms that medieval thinkers employed. Whereas Duby was mostly interested in the make-up of medieval society, his student Jean Flori laid the basis for the ideological analysis of chivalry.⁶⁸ Flori's contemporary, Maurice Keen, explored the chivalric ethos on the other side of the Channel. Keen was the first to include prescriptive texts in his analysis in order to disentangle the complex connections between military ethos and the social ideals of the nobility. At the same time, in Germany, the works of Arno Borst and Johannes Fleckenstein explored the specific circumstances of German knights and the tension between knightly kings and another peculiar group, the *ministeriales* — unfree officials at the royal, princely, and episcopal courts who gained status due to their military service and their roles in princely administration.⁶⁹ Borst and Fleckenstein showed

63 The importance of Menestriers foundational studies on the modern perception of chivalry is discussed in Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, pp. 9–12.

64 Burke's, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

65 Gautier, *La Chevalerie*.

66 Originally published in 1973 in *Hommes et structures du Moyen Âge*, republished in two volumes as *Seigneurs et Paysans* and *La Société chevaleresque*.

67 Duby, *Les trois ordres*.

68 Flori, *L'Idéologie du glaive* discusses the origins of the ideology whereas its high medieval forms are explored in *L'Essor de la chevalerie, XI^e et XII^e siècles* and many later works.

69 Borst, *Ritterliche Lebensformen*; Fleckenstein, *Der König als Ritter*, ed. by Zotz.

that the participation of the knights in courtly culture played a part in their formation as a distinct group and helped formulate the chivalric ideal.

Since the early twentieth century, scholars of medieval literature and philosophy had also been discussing the knightly ethos and some of these discussions were published in a collective volume by Günter Eiffler in 1970. The initial impetus in the research into courtly manners perhaps came from Norbert Elias's *The Civilizing Process*.⁷⁰ The works of Joachim Bumke on medieval courtly culture and the contribution of knights also influenced the field profoundly, to the point that *ministeriales* were regarded as the main patrons and readers of vernacular literature in the high medieval period.⁷¹ The cultural aspects of knighthood remained the focus of attention and in 1990 a number of foundational contributions were published in the volume *Curialitas: Studien zu Grundfragen der höfisch-ritterlichen Kultur*.⁷² The concept of courtliness, the cultural expression of aristocratic values and self-representation, had been researched by C. Stephen Jaeger who traced its origins to the episcopal courts of eleventh-century Germany, where they interacted with secular aristocratic culture and spread across Europe.⁷³ Chivalry and courtliness likely influenced each other, so that elegant manners became vital to chivalry and court culture, in turn, borrowed aspects from chivalry, notably the tournament.⁷⁴

In France, the works of Dominique Barthélemy in particular continued the research on chivalry, especially since he corrected a number of misconceptions in the works of Duby.⁷⁵ Barthélemy discusses the influence of violence and a new piety in the chivalric ideal,⁷⁶ a line of thought also followed by Richard Kaeuper on the other side of the Atlantic.⁷⁷ A new, comprehensive study of the imperial *ministeriales*, covering their work but also their cultural role, was presented in 2002 by Jan Keupp.⁷⁸ Despite the observation that medieval knighthood and its chivalric ethos was a transnational phenomenon, most of these profound studies remain focused on one specific political context and only a few works have extended their range across Western Europe. Aldo Scaglione has emphasized the role of knightly culture at the European courts and described its

70 Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. by Jephcott [first published as *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*].

71 Bumke, *Ministerialität und Rittertum*.

72 *Curialitas. Studien zu Grundfragen der höfisch-ritterlichen Kultur*, ed. by Fleckenstein.

73 Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*.

74 Crouch, *Tournament*, p. 47.

75 Barthélemy, *La mutation de l'an mil a-t-elle eu lieu*.

76 Barthélemy, *Chevaliers et miracles*.

77 Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* and *Holy Warriors* and most recently *Medieval Chivalry*.

78 Keupp, *Dienst und Verdienst*.

ideals, manners, and the constructions of its identities from the latter years of the Holy Roman Empire to the Italian Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, making ample use of literary sources.⁷⁹ Studies of courtesy books have also been conducted by scholars of medieval literature. Constance B. West focuses on *amour courtoise*, though her study did not examine didactic poetry in much depth: in a chapter on 'Doctrinal Literature', for example, the *Doctrinal Sauvage* is not dealt with at all, as it is not concerned with courtly love.⁸⁰ Jonathan Nicholls studies medieval courtesy books in English, French, Anglo-Norman, and Latin (the successors of the texts studied in this book), and employed them in his reading of the *Gawain*-poet's works, comparing prescriptive texts with the description of courtly etiquette; this is a valuable approach for the assessment of normative poetry but also for examining courtly values as presented in narrative.⁸¹ Anna Bryson has examined the post-history of medieval courtesy and its transition into a different social code of conduct, which she terms *civility*.⁸² John Gillingham engages with Bryson's approach, examining English, Anglo-Norman, and Latin poetry in context and concluding that 'civility' is present already in the earliest Latin courtesy books as well as secular advice poetry such as the *Disticha Catonis*. On the way to this conclusion, he also offers most insightful analysis of Anglo-Norman didactic literature and the way it helped to shape the ideal of the civilized gentleman.⁸³ Recently, Elisabeth Schulze-Busacker gave a comprehensive overview of secular didactic literature in the Middle Ages, with a particular focus on gnomic literature, mostly in French.⁸⁴ However, although her study contributes to an understanding of secular instruction in literature and its development over the Middle Ages, Schulze-Busacker does not engage with didactic poetry at large.

Didactic literature in different languages have recently been brought together in the volume by Juanita Feros Ruys's *What Nature Does Not Teach*, which provides an interesting overview of medieval didactic literature from different European languages and over the medieval and early modern periods.⁸⁵ Henrike Lähnemann and Sandra Linden have also published a volume on 'Dichtung und Didaxe', collecting research on didactic modes of speaking in medieval literature.⁸⁶ However, while these volumes collect a broad range of contributions to the research on individual traditions, there is little basis for a truly comparative approach.

79 Scaglione, *Knights at Court*.

80 West, *Courtesy in Anglo-Norman Literature*.

81 Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy*.

82 Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*.

83 Gillingham, 'From Civilitas to Civility'.

84 Schulze-Busacker, *La Didactique profane*.

85 Feros Ruys, ed., *What Nature Does Not Teach*.

86 Lähnemann and Linden, eds, *Dichtung und Didaxe*.

Apart from the tentative beginnings in the work of Keen, prescriptive texts have been largely overlooked as sources of knowledge about the values and norms central to medieval nobility. The work of David Crouch, however, crosses the national divide and refocuses on the normative aspects and the underlying values of chivalry and their influence on medieval aristocratic society. *The Birth of Nobility* focuses on the transformation of noble society through its growing interest in morality in England and France.⁸⁷ His most recent book, *The Chivalric Turn*, transcends this earlier study both in geographical scope and in its conclusions, as Crouch traces the development of norms and values across Western Europe in a profound study of the moral tracts and didactic texts written in this period for a noble audience.⁸⁸

Curiously, with so much attention on the values of the medieval aristocracy, little is known today of the way they were taught to its members. The education of the nobility has recently drawn much attention, but although moral education has sometimes been included, it is almost as a by-product. Stephen Jaeger has, in many of his works, emphasized the role of the cathedral schools, where *litterae* and *mores* were taught in unison, embedding classical moral tracts in the education of those with access to learning, i.e. the clergy and, from the twelfth century onwards, increasingly the nobility.⁸⁹ Works on medieval childhood, such as Nicholas Orme's *From Childhood to Chivalry* and Ruth Mazo Karras's *From Boys to Men* examine sources on the education of medieval childhood and find that morality came into play at several stages, from the nursery to the teachings of private tutors, education at another court, schools and universities, as well as from confessors and bishops at royal courts.⁹⁰ Martin Aurell has greatly contributed to our understanding of the education of the French nobility. In his study of the *chevalier lettré*, he includes a comprehensive chapter on moral education,⁹¹ and he uses literary sources alongside other material throughout his study. Finally, Elodie Lequain has specifically researched the education of noblewomen in France, emphasizing that a major point of focus was on morality and virtue.⁹²

Unfortunately, the sources are often silent when it comes to the contents or the process of such teaching; the little we know usually dates from the later Middle Ages.⁹³ We are now aware that morality was not just central to noble self-fashioning and the chances of lower-ranking aristocrats

87 Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*.

88 Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*.

89 Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*.

90 Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*; Karras, *From Boys to Men*.

91 Aurell, *Le chevalier lettré*.

92 Lequain, 'L'éducation des femmes de la noblesse en France au Moyen Âge', see also Lorcin, 'L'école des femmes', pp. 233–48.

93 See e.g. the studies by Müsegedes, *Fürstliche Erziehung* and Deutschländer, *Dienen lernen*.

gaining renown and social capital, but also that moral codes were actively taught to all the different ranks within the medieval elites. My aim in this book is to explore how this education took place and what role it played in medieval society. This moral education set in at a point in history when the aristocracy was starting to value morality and good conduct in such a way that it came to define itself by these ideals. This study can thus also reveal the negotiations and adaptations that aligned values from a variety of different origins and made them applicable to different social groups.

The Contribution of this Book

To these works in the field of aristocratic values we owe much of what we now know about the ideals to which the secular elites all across Europe subscribed, and the role they played in literary culture, identity, and self-fashioning. Though moral tracts and didactic writing have been used as sources for noble morality, little has been said about the process of distributing ideals, norms, and values. This book will, for the first time, systematically explore the teaching and learning of these values and the role of moral education in aristocratic society in the high medieval period.

Following the overview in this Introduction, Chapter 1 expands on some of the notions introduced here, particularly the role of moral education in the biography of Western European nobles, knights, and courtiers. It examines the stages and situations in the life of a noble person in which they would receive moral education or ethical advice, introducing the various people who taught and instructed on these matters and analysing their relationships with their disciples. In this context, Chapter 1 also introduces the most important moral-didactic texts of the period (written in various languages), which will be discussed in more detail in the remainder of the book. It addresses not only regional differences but also variations that reflected the status of the disciple and the situation or function for which they were supposed to be prepared. This chapter thereby explains the connection between oral teaching and didactic writing and analyses the social function of the latter, along with its situatedness in elite culture of the High Middle Ages.

Chapter 2 continues in this vein and analyses closely how medieval authors bridged the gap between themselves and their readers that resulted from the spatial and temporal distance between them. By using different modes of speaking, different degrees of formality and a variety of rhetorical and stylistic strategies, the authors established a connection with their audiences, and performed their own status and social roles as teachers and advisors. Introducing teacher-personas that delivered the teaching, they referred to familiar teaching situations in the lives of their audiences to enhance the chances that their teaching would be met with favour

and acceptance. While some of these literary forms had been used in didactic writing since antiquity and drew some of their authority from this tradition, other authors creatively explored the new possibilities that writing in the vernacular provided, producing singular forms and didactic methods.

Chapter 3 explores the courtly cosmos for which didactic texts were produced and which they were supposed to help their audiences navigate. It contrasts courtly ideal with the often harsh criticism that was produced at the same time, and explores didactic writing as a mediator between the two poles. Courtly conduct was not arbitrary but a way to communicate and perform morality. The court was a microcosm that was supposed to mirror a superior order. Its shortcomings therefore reflected the corruption of the world: the rules of conduct were either a way to approximate the ideal order or to navigate the corrupted status quo. This chapter details why morality and good conduct were essential at the courts and the role they played in creating an idealized courtly cosmos.

Since norms are essentially codified values and expressions of the same, courtly society all across north-western Europe must have agreed on similar values. Chapter 4 looks deeper into the rationales behind particular teachings and the benefits their writers promised for compliance. The texts discussed here allow us insights about the roles individuals were supposed to fulfil in courtly society and also into the function by which nobility aimed to justify its elevated position in the medieval social order. This chapter argues that the legitimization of nobility as a whole depended on the morality displayed by its members, therefore demonstrating the integrative potential developed in such moral codes.

Chapter 5 explores the question of how moral knowledge and advice on good conduct was represented in the books and manuscripts that transmitted them. Starting from the distinction between verse and prose and their relative status in teaching, the chapter traces the transformation of the organization of knowledge, from the collection of *auctoritates* in the *florilegia* to the systematic treatment of all knowledge in a system in which morality occupied a central place. From here, the discussion moves on to the way such knowledge was transmitted in codices and manuscripts, and analyses illustrations and diagrams that guide and facilitate the understanding of specific teaching. The developments in the corpus of knowledge deemed fitting for aristocracy is reflected in the layout of the codices, which also tell us much about the appreciation of moral teaching in the vernacular in high medieval society.

This book explores many facets of the process of teaching of morality and good conduct, shedding light on its pivotal role in the formation of an aristocratic pan-European community that adhered to the same values and used them in the legitimization of their status. It is thus also an exploration of education as a driving force of social distinction and the formation of

social classes. As this book aims to show, moral education had immense potential for integration and, at the same time, served to legitimize exclusion. It was not only the norms and values of aristocratic society but the very process of learning them that shaped aristocratic communities and created a new nobility in high medieval Europe.

Teaching Morality

In all human societies, it is crucial for its members to agree on at least a basic set of values on which their communities can be based. In order to interact with one another, people must share a common idea of what is deemed acceptable conduct, and these norms are based on their fundamental values. Values are generally acquired through immersion, imitation, or inspiration. Growing up in a given society, an individual acquires a set of such values, that is, ideas of what is good. They cannot be actively learned, but rather are passively absorbed.¹ As children grow up in communities, they take in these values and it takes other influences for them to question them (such as contact with other communities and their values, or a personal experience that shifts them). This does not mean, of course, that their every action will be guided by these values. Desires are strong and humans frequently act on other motives that override their values. Therefore, societies have established norms that regulate — often in detail — how people should act. Unlike values, these norms can be controlled, sanctioned, and penalized. They can be codified in legal works or simply considered good practice. The range of consequences from a breach of norms can range from a raised eyebrow to imprisonment or the death penalty. These norms and their consequences are highly dependent on context.

People in the Middle Ages, too, shared certain values and comprehended a range of norms that codified them, complete with the penalties for their transgressions. There were values shared by all — belief in God, for example — and others that were specific to certain groups, like the value of poverty in the mendicant orders. From the twelfth century, nobility was distinguished by a particularly strong focus on values and, consequently, noble society established a range of norms meant to express these values, which its members had to learn. Often these norms were taught alongside other, associated forms of knowledge deemed necessary or advantageous for members of a certain group.²

¹ Joas, *Die Entstehung der Werte*, p. 47.

² For the Middle Ages, the teaching of norms and values has not been subject to independent study but has been addressed in the wider context of teaching and learning. A comprehensive study of the education of noble children in England was provided by Orme in *From Childhood to Chivalry*, which remains the standard work. Due to the available

In this chapter, I will sketch the education of the nobility in north-western Europe with a focus on the ways it involved learning about morality and good conduct — that is, the values and norms of aristocratic society. As this book draws on the teaching conveyed in texts, this chapter will provide the context for moral-didactic writing and also introduce some important texts that will be discussed in the following chapters. My aim is to assign those works their place in the wider context of moral teaching and learning in aristocratic communities and demonstrate how closely written moral instruction was intertwined with teaching in person. The contents, transmission, and reception of moral-didactic writing — its very existence — shows the importance of the function that medieval nobles assigned to the teaching and learning of morality and good conduct. The texts also allow us insights into the groups that interacted in this type of teaching and learning — kings and princes, knights and courtiers, clerics, and laymen — and thus offer us a much more nuanced understanding of the joint venture of teaching and learning and its potential to build community.

Teaching the Noble Child

Primary Learning at Home

The formative years of noble children's lives were generally spent in their parents' households. Formal education was not usually started before the child was six or seven years old.³ Before this, the child mostly stayed in the company of their mother, nurses, and perhaps some servants. While no educational curriculum was pursued in these early years, they were nevertheless crucial in shaping the child's basic value system and their patterns of social interaction.⁴ Noble children would, from a young age, learn that there were people to whom they owed reverence (like their

sources, most studies focus on the education of princes and kings in the later Middle Ages. Regarding princely education in the Empire, Müsegedes' *Fürstliche Erziehung* and Deutschländer's *Dienen lernen* analyse a wide range of sources from the later Middle Ages. A comprehensive study on the (mostly literary) education of lay elites in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with a focus on France and England, is provided in Martin Aurell, *Le chevalier lettré*, translated as *The Lettered Knight*. For the Empire, a comprehensive treatment of aristocratic education in the high Middle Ages remains a desideratum. Moral education in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is most frequently discussed in the context of chivalry, most recently by David Crouch in *The Chivalric Turn*, whose broad geographical framework covers most of Western Europe and whose range of sources ensures that this work will be the starting point for more detailed studies in the future (as it was for the present book).

³ Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p. 18.

⁴ Walker, 'The Family Context', pp. 261–64.

fathers) and people who were there to fulfil their needs, such as nurses and servants. They would grow up with splendid clothes, rich food, toys, and a comfortable bed, all of which would accustom them to the luxuries of their later lives.⁵ A child would observe that their father spent much of his time away from home, and if their father *was* home, they would see him surrounded by people who treated him with great respect. In the mid-thirteenth century, some royal children even had their own households.⁶ While these were not yet under their own command, they became accustomed to a larger circle of people (which might range from ten to thirty or more in the later Middle Ages) that were permanently occupied with their affairs. A child of a lesser noble family, with little wealth, would not only grow up lacking such comfort and luxury, but also observe different patterns of behaviour in the people around them. The parental household would have fewer servants and they would not be wholly at the child's disposal, as they continued to run the affairs of the family. The child's social interactions would involve fewer people and they might be treated with less deference than the successor to the royal throne. More of the child's contacts would be family members, as mothers would have taken on tasks performed by nurses in royal households and fathers would have spent more time at home, too. Such a child would grow up with a different self-image than that of a king or prince. Thus, even in the earliest years of childhood, there must have been differences in children's basic conceptions of the world, society, and their place in it.

The early years of childhood were also the time when the foundations of religious belief were laid, and it was consequently a child's mother who had the greatest influence on their early religious development.⁷ Mothers taught their children how to pray and read them psalms and sermons from their own books.⁸ Children first attended church while holding the hands of their mothers, from whom they might have learned their first songs. Christian writers from Augustine to Bernard of Clairvaux and Guibert of Nogent emphasized the great influence their mothers had on their virtuous upbringing and how their good example shaped their character.⁹

According to philosophers and moralists of the time, it was important that the child would then receive an education. Aristotle recommends that by the age of five a child should begin to observe and by seven participate in study. Around this age, then, young noble children were given a tutor to oversee their upbringing and education. In the Angevin

⁵ Hall, "Merely players?"; pp. 39–56.

⁶ For examples for England, cf. Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, pp. 14 and 28–29.

⁷ Riché, 'L'éducation religieuse par les femmes', p. 37.

⁸ Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners', pp. 756–57.

⁹ Guibert of Nogent, *Memoirs*, ed. with an introduction by Benton, p. 38; other examples in Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, p. 26.

royal family, a knight would typically be chosen for a king's son who would guide him in matters of dress, appropriate speech, and manners, instruct him in fighting, hunting, hawking, jousting, and horse riding, and steer his social interactions.¹⁰ This role was a combination of teacher and chaperone, and frequently he would ensure that the young prince's education was completed by specialists. Their titles are recorded in lists of witnesses and household books, where they are called *magister*, *pedagogus*, *preceptor*, *doctor*, or *nutritius* (educator).¹¹ This role could be fulfilled by a cleric instead of a knight, which was more often the case in the French households.¹² Royal tutors could later become bishops, as an office at court was one way for the secular clergy to gain a bishopric. The most famous example is probably Thomas Beckett, tutor to the sons of Henry II prior to winning the see of Canterbury, who was supported in his tutelage by fifty-two clerics.¹³

In addition, clerks could be employed to teach grammar and reading. Other courtiers might provide an education in dance and music. Besides becoming more and more integrated into the household and learning the modes of interaction by immersion, boys would be explicitly taught how to behave in specific circumstances, such as at the table, in church, or during festive occasions. The boys would go to church and have a confessor who oversaw their religious education.

It was also during these childhood years that the education of girls began to differ from that of boys. As the sons were entrusted to the governance of a master, girls remained in female care. In royal or princely households, a daughter, too, would be placed under the supervision of a mistress (*magistrae*) who oversaw her education. These women were often the wives of household knights or courtiers but could also be widows of good reputation or relatives of the aristocratic family.¹⁴ Girls learned morality and good manners, just like the boys. Their wider curriculum included courtly pursuits such as singing and dancing; they might learn to hunt with a bird of prey and do needlework.¹⁵ Girls, too, were taught to read and often spent much more of their education studying literature than the boys. Scholars drew up lists of appropriate reading for girls that consisted mainly of books of hours and psalms or other devotional literature to ensure that their minds were occupied with virtuous thoughts. Girls learned languages, especially when they were likely to marry abroad, and

10 Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p. 20. At the late medieval imperial court, the role of the *magister curiae* would typically be filled by a man from the lower nobility who already held an office at the princely court. See Müsegedes, *Fürstliche Erziehung*, p. 137.

11 Aurell, *Le chevalier lettré*, p. 56.

12 Aurell, *Le chevalier lettré*, pp. 57–58.

13 Aurell, *Le chevalier lettré*, p. 61.

14 Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p. 17.

15 Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p. 21.

some achieved remarkable eloquence in them.¹⁶ In their later childhood and early youth, noble daughters began to interact with courtly society, though dissenting voices throughout the Middle Ages argued in favour of a more rigorous seclusion of girls, to shield their supposedly weaker minds from corrupting influences and prevent sinful thoughts.¹⁷ The degree and duration of their learning varied greatly and was not only dependent on their families' means but also on their motivation for educating their daughters; some authors advised strongly against educating girls at all.¹⁸ However, the same is true of the formal education of boys, and historians have tended to conclude that from the twelfth century the literacy of women in both Latin and the vernaculars often surpassed that of their brothers.¹⁹

Frequently, however, girls were supposed to learn the skills necessary to fulfil their roles in courtly society: to host guests, to entertain with pleasant conversation, or to interact with high-ranking aristocrats at official occasions and represent their families in the best light.²⁰ And finally, if they did not choose a religious vocation, their influence would be pivotal in bringing up the next generation. For girls and young women in particular, morality and good conduct played the central role in their education.

These years between childhood and maturity were deemed the most import for a child's moral development and learning good conduct in their early years had the highest priority. From the twelfth century onwards, educational treatises were written with the aim of regulating the teaching of young princes during these formative years. Between about 1248 and 1254, the Dominican friar Vincent of Beauvais composed his treatise *De eruditione filiorum nobilium* for the education of the children of the French royal couple, Louis IX and Marguerite of Provence, to whom the work is dedicated.²¹ *De eruditione* is informative not so much about the state of education for aristocratic children at its time, as about the writer's intent to revolutionize it. His pedagogy was part of a larger programme to reform royal kingship (as detailed in his other works, notably his *De morali principis institutione* and his encyclopaedic work *Speculum maius*). *De eruditione*, however, demonstrates the great importance that was accorded to

16 Spieß, 'Fremdheit und Integration der ausländischen Ehefrau', pp. 267–90.

17 Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, ed. by Steiner, chap. XLII, p. 172.

18 Aurell, *Le chevalier lettré*, pp. 220–21.

19 This is the judgement of Duby, 'The Culture of the Knightly Class', p. 258, and Green, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages*, p. 248; conversely, with a focus on the Latin of nunneries, see Bumke, *Höfische Kultur*. The argument is traced in Aurell, *Le chevalier lettré*, pp. 255–58; Aurell himself sees insufficient evidence for a final conclusion on the superiority of female lay literacy (p. 258).

20 Cf. the discussion of female roles and their connection to virtue in Chapter 4.

21 Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, ed. by Steiner; concerning the dating, cf. Föller, *Königskinder*, p. 61.

the education of aristocratic children — boys and girls — for the success of the royal dynasty. Prioritizing their education would allow French kingship to fulfil its full potential and lead to an ordered, learned form of government.²² Special importance is assigned to the choice of the master who would oversee and organize the education of the royal children ‘in the sciences and morals’ (*in scientia ac moribus*).²³ Crucially, he must be chosen for his own moral qualities and personal virtues. Works like *De eruditione*, though addressed to the queen, were also used as manuals by masters and governors. Vincent’s text itself was consulted by and supplied to the cleric Simon, master to Philip and his older siblings.²⁴ It was Vincent’s intention that the work be consulted by other aristocratic families, too, and it includes chapters that were not relevant for the upbringing of royal children but instead give advice on clerical careers and the university curriculum.

As for the curriculum, Vincent drew heavily on the previous work of John of Salisbury, who wrote his *Metalogicon* in defence of a full arts curriculum crowned by ethics and moral philosophy.²⁵ To Vincent, the study of the arts and sciences and the training in morals was vital, especially for the king, who was answerable only to God.²⁶ A full chapter is dedicated to the education in morals (xxiii: *De morali puerorum instructione*); others discuss a son’s obedience to his father and his social life. For the first time, such a treatise also explicitly addressed the education of girls. However, progressive as this may seem, in large part, Vincent’s educational programme for girls rather limited their sphere of action. Whereas sons needed to be educated, daughters should mostly be guarded.²⁷ While they needed to learn to read, this was meant to enable them to consult the Scripture. His advice for girls and women, largely taken from Jerome’s letters to his female disciples, exclusively concerns self-control, taciturnity, and obedience — the virtues of a good wife or nun.²⁸ Responsibility for the education of both girls and boys falls, in *De eruditione*, no longer to the mother but to the father as Vincent withdraws all educational influence

22 McCarthy, *Humanistic Emphases in the Educational Thought of Vincent of Beauvais*.

23 Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, ed. by Steiner, II, 1, p. 8.

24 Jacobs-Pollez, ‘The Education of Noble Girls’, p. 112.

25 John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, ed. by Hall and Haseldine; cf. McGarry, ‘Educational Theory in the Metalogicon’, p. 672.

26 Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, ed. by Steiner, I, p. 6.

27 “Filii tibi sunt, erudi illos etc.” Sequitur de filiarum eruditione de qua ibidem subiungitur: “Filie tibi sunt, serua corpus illiarum et non ostendas hilarem faciem tuam ad illas.” Serua, inquam, corpus illarum in etate puellari que prona est lasciuie, sc. ut non passim ad choreas uel spectacula uel conuiuia euagentur, sed in domo custodianur, ne uagantes concupiscant uel concupiscantur... Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, ed. by Steiner, XLII, pp. 172–73.

28 Jacobs-Pollez, ‘The Role of the Mother’, p. 22.

from women.²⁹ King Louis himself took great pleasure in instructing his children in Christian thought and virtues and wrote a moral-didactic letter-treatise to his daughter Ysabel when she was queen of Navarre, as well as an instruction on morality and good kingship to his successor, Philip.³⁰ The teaching and learning of morality formed an integral part of the self-fashioning of Louis IX and his successors.³¹ Despite Vincent's views and the great interest in the upbringing of his children displayed by Louis, Capetian queens had traditionally enjoyed significant influence over their children's education and their sons' practice of government. In particular, Louis's mother Blanche and his wife Marguerite actively guided the moral upbringing of their children. Louis himself had learned his first letters and a great deal of moral instruction from Blanche during his infancy.³² Vincent's advice on the education of royal children must be seen in the context of his promotion of administrative kingship, in which many of the functions of women in the government would be replaced by officials. Despite the limits Vincent puts on female agency, it seems that as a result of his treatise and due to his explicit inclusion of girls in his educational programme, aristocratic girls in later medieval France received a rather better education than before.³³

Communal Learning

Cathedral schools had been centres for the teaching and learning of morality and good conduct since their rise in the eleventh century and clerics educated at these institutions went on to become parish priests, court officials, or tutors. Based on the ethics transmitted in the classical writings of Cicero and Seneca, who considered that the *civiles mores* should be cultivated in a person, teachers served as charismatic models of the personal dignity, elegance, and harmony of inner virtue and outer conduct. Teaching was characterized by a bond of friendship between teacher and

²⁹ Jacobs-Pollez, 'The Role of the Mother', pp. 15–27.

³⁰ For a discussion of these texts in the context of education at the court of Louis IX, see Föller, *Königskinder*.

³¹ Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis*, pp. 21–47.

³² Jacobs-Pollez, 'The Role of the Mother', p. 17.

³³ The influence of Vincent's treatise is uncertain. Twenty-seven manuscripts survive to this day, another four are known to have existed but have been lost. Jacobs-Pollez argues, based on the transmission of these manuscripts, that Vincent's influence extended mostly to the teaching of boys in abbeys, colleges and universities ('The Education of Noble Girls', p. 217). Parts of his work were further transmitted in the treatise by Willem Peraldus, who makes liberal use of *De eruditione* as a source; cf. Steiner, 'Guillaume Perrault and Vincent of Beauvais'. Parts of *De eruditione* are also used in various tales of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Christine de Pizan's *Cité des Dames* and *The Book of the Body Politics*. Jacobs-Pollez, 'The Education of Noble Girls', pp. 218–20.

student, so the cathedral school ideally provided an environment in which *litterae et mores* were learned in unison.³⁴ A strain of learning based on the cultivation of virtue (*cultus virtutum*) gradually disappeared from the schools with the advent of a new form of learning that favoured logical inquiry over charismatic teaching personas, but it found a new home in some centres of monastic learning (notably the 'School of St Victor'). *Cultus virtutum* of the cathedral schools also had a profound influence on the significance of moral perfection at the courts.³⁵

As schools became more widespread in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the sons of the lay nobility increasingly attended them, they still learned their basic Latin from school books that transmitted classical ethics. All across Europe, the short, simple precepts transmitted in Pseudo-Cato and *Facetus*, along with the *Urbanus magnus* in England, were many noblemen's first reading experience and snippets of them are found in a range of moral-didactic texts intended for the courts, in both Latin and the vernaculars. From the mid-fourteenth century, a large number of vernacular translations of the *Cato* are transmitted, evidence that its interest went beyond basic Latin teaching.³⁶ Girls would have learned their *Cato* from their grammar mistress or at the nunneries, which accepted students in their schools even if no religious path was chosen for them.

Many girls and some boys would have received their education at a religious institution, even if they did not enter them as novices. The practice of child oblates died out during the twelfth century but boys were still sent to the monasteries to acquire knowledge considered beneficial to laymen as well as necessary for the secular clergy.³⁷ Girls continued to be given as oblates, but many boarded at religious houses and were educated there only until they were aged between twelve to fourteen, when they could be entrusted to a lay household.³⁸ The literature on the teaching of disciples in such institutions likewise began to grow in the twelfth century and its contents are not unlike the advice given by moralists on the education of the children of the lay nobility. The virtues laid out for anchoresses in the early thirteenth-century *Ancrene Wisse* do not greatly differ from those concerning the virtues of noblewomen, and the educational programme of Hugh of Saint Victor's *Didascalicon* would have served any aristocratic boy in his pursuit of knowledge in the arts, sciences, and — most importantly — ethics.³⁹

34 Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, pp. 76–82.

35 Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, pp. 244–64; see also Jaeger, 'Medieval Humanism' and 'Victorine Humanism'.

36 Baldzuhn, *Schulbücher im Trivium des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit*.

37 Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p. 62.

38 Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p. 64.

39 *Ancrene Wisse*, ed. by Hasenfratz; Hugh of Saint Victor, *Didascalicon*, ed. by Buttimer.

By the thirteenth century, noble sons who aimed to pursue a clerical path moved for advanced studies into the newly founded universities. The basic curriculum of the *Artes* (specifically the Trivium) familiarized them with classical writing, the basis of which was ethical formation, in addition to its commentaries and development in the works of the Church fathers. Most students did not pursue their studies beyond the arts, though those who went on to study the highest discipline, theology, would find themselves in the middle of the heated discussions of the day, concerning questions of intention (Peter Abelard), Aristotelian ethics (Thomas Aquinas), and the authority of the teacher (Bernard of Clairvaux).⁴⁰ Though these are not the groups this book is concerned with, it demonstrates clearly how every branch of medieval education was deeply involved in matters of morality.

In order to acquire greater practical knowledge, which would serve the child in a secular life, some parents would send their children away: to be educated at another, more influential court, to learn alongside the children of the higher nobility, to serve, to pick up the language and conduct of the court, and to establish contacts.⁴¹ This practice is well recorded for princely children. Baudouin V, count of Hainaut, sent his son to the imperial court of Henry VI, not just as a pledge of good faith in the ongoing negotiations between the two rulers but also to allow him to learn the manners and language of this court.⁴² In a letter to Louis VII of France, Duke Henry the Lion thanked the king for taking the son of one of his vassals into his care and encouraged him to send a French noble son to his court in return, an exchange that was not only beneficial for the boys in question but also strengthened the relationship between the royal and ducal courts at a time in which the latter was in conflict with the Emperor.⁴³ Noble children who were sent to a royal court would have learned with the royal children, any noble heirs in the king's wardship, and the children of other noble families.⁴⁴ For the families farther removed from the court, this offered a chance for their children to learn appropriate behaviour among the magnates and the king. The court of Welf V (1101–1120) was already being described in the *Historia Welforum* as a centre of learning: 'He ordered his house so well that the noblest families in both provinces were eager to entrust the education of their sons to his magisterium'.⁴⁵ In England, where the Norman tradition of wardship meant that the king frequently took in children whose fathers were captured or died before

40 Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, pp. 244–76.

41 Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p. 57.

42 Aurell, *Le chevalier lettré*, p. 208.

43 Aurell, *Le chevalier lettré*, p. 60.

44 Orme, 'The Education of the Courtier', p. 63.

45 *Historia Welforum*, ed. by König, p. 22.

their heir had reached maturity, larger numbers of children were present at court and, if they were of higher rank, learned there with the royal children.⁴⁶ The households of princes and magnates, but also of bishops and other great ecclesiastics across Europe, served a similar function and children of lesser nobles brought up there would have the chance not only to receive teaching but to associate with other nobles, learn the behaviour of the highest ranks of noble society, and aim to gain a good reputation that could result in benefices, offices, or other forms of patronage.⁴⁷ We know that the court of the count of Flanders was sought after for its chivalric reputation and that children were trained at Thomas Beckett's household in the 1160s.⁴⁸ Where this was not possible, service at the court of a higher-ranking relative or a local lord would serve the same purpose. Where access to a princely court was not an opportunity afforded to the child, a relative could take up the education of their nephew. Due to the practice of 'hypergamy' this was frequently the mother's brother or father.⁴⁹

Didactic Literature for Children and Youths

Despite the availability of institutions of formal education and the help of designated tutors and masters, mothers and fathers frequently took an active interest in the education of their children of both sexes beyond infancy. Their role was even more central where the household could not sustain a number of masters, tutors, and teachers to educate the children. In order to teach their children, lesser noble families would have included them in the tasks that were needed to fulfil their future roles. Just as kings bestowed lordships on their sons at an early age, other nobles issued documents on which they were named together with their successors, appeared with their heirs on public occasions, established foundations in both names, and thus gradually integrated them into their lordships.⁵⁰ In the families of the lower nobility, we can assume that fathers taught their sons about the running of a household, proper conduct at court, and the basic virtues and rules of courtly communication needed in interactions with their peers and betters. It is at this point where some of the conduct literature in the vernacular languages comes into play. Much moral-didactic writing aims to help those who grew up far from the big courts to learn the basics of courtly conduct. Some explicitly address the

46 Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p. 50.

47 Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p. 55.

48 Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, pp. 56–57.

49 Aurell, *Le chevalier lettré*, p. 55.

50 Lyon, 'Fathers and Sons', pp. 291–310.

parents who are to instruct their children or use the parental voice to convey their teaching.⁵¹

The conceit of a parent teaching their child is used in one of the more widely distributed didactic poems of the mid-thirteenth century, called in some manuscripts *Der Winsbecke*.⁵² It is presented as a father–son dialogue in eighty ten-line stanzas, in which a father advises his son in several aspects of courtly life including Christian duties, love, the meaning of knighthood, courtly ritual, the duties of a host, and how to lead an honourable household. The father refers to his own experience at court and his former career as a knight, which qualifies him to instruct his son. The text combines basic Christian teaching on virtue with ethics and practical advice. The tenor of the advice indicates that it addresses an audience composed of the lesser nobility: significant emphasis is put on service, correct behaviour at court, and how to deal with hostility and poverty. It summarizes in a nutshell all the young knight needs to know of morality and conduct.

Though the father's advice is rather conventional for texts of this kind, the poem has inspired lively discussions due to the son's unexpected reply to his father, refuting his advice and admonishing him to embark on a religious life. And indeed, the father subsequently gives away all his possessions and enters a monastery, together with his son. This sudden turn of events has led scholars to wonder if the reply was perhaps a later addition, as stylistic differences between the two parts seem to indicate.⁵³ However, since the majority of the manuscripts in which the text is found transmit both parts together, medieval readers apparently did not find them to be at odds with each other: courtly instruction remains valuable even if one eventually opts for a religious life.

⁵¹ The role of the parental voice in didactic writing has been analysed by Feros Ruys in 'Didactic I's and the Voice of Experience'. Feros Ruys found that experience played little role in parental teaching, which holds true only in part for the texts discussed here.

⁵² *Winsbeckische Gedichte nebst Tirol und Fridebrant*, ed. by Leitzmann, pp. 1–45. This edition combines the text of the three oldest manuscripts into one composite text. Since all secondary literature is based on this edition, I will follow it in my citations without retaining the diacritics. Another edition with translation based on Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. germ. fol. 474 was offered by Rasmussen and Trokhimenko, 'Winsbecke, Winsbeckin and Winsbecke Parodies'. I use this translation wherever the edition does not differ from the older one by Leitzmann.

⁵³ Since the edition by Moriz Haupt, *Der Winsbeke und die Winsbekin*, the poem has been published as two parts, one supposedly written by a knight, the other by a cleric. The standard edition by Leitzmann, also in its revised third edition (edited by Reiffenstein), prints the father's verses and only adds the son's verses and the father's reply as 'continuations'; Leitzmann, *Winsbeckische Gedichte*, p. 33, 'Die Fortsetzungen'. The discussion is summarized in Behr, "der weden lop" und "gotes hulde", pp. 377–94, who sees no reason to assume two different authors (pp. 382–83).

The *Winsbecke* is transmitted in fifteen manuscripts (of which five are fragments), dating from the end of the thirteenth century (the fragment Krakau, Berol Ms. Germ. Qua. 1533) to the mid-fifteenth century.⁵⁴ It is included in the two most famous medieval German lyric collections: the Heidelberger Liederhandschrift, also known as Codex Manesse, from around 1300,⁵⁵ and the Weingartner Liederhandschrift,⁵⁶ dating from the first quarter of the fourteenth century. The former is noted for its full-page illustrations of the authors of the lyrical poems collected in the codex, which precede the texts. *Der Winsbecke* takes its name from the rubric in this codex, where the text is preceded by an illustration of the father–son dialogue.

The *Winsbecke* is often accompanied in the manuscripts by a feminine counterpart, *Diu Winsbeckin*, a mother–daughter dialogue, which was perhaps inspired by the male dialogue poem, and may have been composed by the same author.⁵⁷ The miniature of the *Winsbeckin* in the Codex Manesse depicts mother and daughter in analogy to the male interlocutors, and the title in the rubric is chosen accordingly.⁵⁸

Diu Winsbeckin uses the same parental advice scenario, but it is framed as a true dialogue with regular turn-taking. In 450 lines, a mother teaches her daughter about the importance of *zuht* (discipline),⁵⁹ *schâm* (decency), and *mâze* (moderation) in a noble girl. Both agree that a woman's task is to please. Though the daughter is initially disinclined to accept the mother's teaching, their discussion eventually teaches her that it is her role in courtly society to be both chaste and an object of male desire who will attract the right kind of admirer. The core of the instruction is the concept of 'courtly love' and women's role in this pursuit.

⁵⁴ "Winsbecke" und "Winsbeckin", *Handschriftenzensus*.

⁵⁵ Heidelberg, UB, Cod. Pal. germ. 848. A digital reproduction of the codex is available at the web page of the Heidelberger historische Bestände – digital: 'Codex Manesse'.

⁵⁶ A digital reproduction is available in the web page of the Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart, Handschriften: 'Weingartner Liederhandschrift, HB XIII 1'.

⁵⁷ Haupt, in 'Ährenlese', argues for the same author (p. 261); Leitzmann is convinced that a second author has imitated the work of the *Winsbecke*-author (*Winsbeckische Gedichte*, p. 7).

⁵⁸ The *Winsbeckin* is always transmitted with the *Winsbecke*, but not vice versa (eight manuscripts contain both poems). There is also a fourteenth-century parody of the *Winsbecke*, a comic reversal of the advice from the poem, which is transmitted once with the *Winsbecke*-poems and once without it. Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. B XI 8 transmits a spiritual contrafact of stanza 22. Manuscript Copenhagen, König. Bibl., NKS Cod. 662,8° transmits all three poems.

⁵⁹ English translation by Rasmussen and Trokhimenko, 'Winsbecke, Winsbeckin, and Winsbecke Parodies', pp. 105–21. See also note 52.

The two texts delineate the spheres of courtly society considered suitable for noble boys and girls. Whereas the teaching for the boy encompasses a range of topics, the girl learns to balance her role as an object of male desire with the necessity of retaining a reputation of chastity. Both mother and father refer to their own experience at court — we can see how such literature would be of interest for parents of the lesser nobility if they themselves lacked such experience. The execution of the manuscripts indicates that their readership was drawn from the lower ranks: apart from the Codex Manesse, none of them include illuminations, and all are rather small in format and lacking in elegance.

While the framing of *Winsbecke* and *Winsbeckin* implies that the texts may supplement parents' own courtly experience, other texts aim to supply the role of a tutor for the teaching of morals and manners, a luxury that might not be available to the children of smaller households. The *Magezoge*⁶⁰ presents itself as a 'mirror of youth,' written in the voice of a tutor who has collected the moral teachings the text presents so that a father may use them to teach his son: 'Ich heize ein spigel der tugende | und ein magezoge der jugende [...] die lere sol der vater geben | sinem sun, daz ist gut' (I am called a mirror of virtue and a tutor to the youths [...] This teaching a father should give to his son, this is good; ll. 1–2 and 10–11).

The gnomic poem of c. 400 lines offers material with which fathers can advise their sons in different aspects of life, such as religion, duties of knighthood, friendship, counsel, interaction with subordinates, and management of property. It addresses the virtues necessary for young noblemen to lead honourable lives as they went out into the world, in accordance with Christian values. The poem is transmitted in nine manuscripts, all of them dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁶¹ The text, however, dates to the mid-thirteenth century.⁶² The manuscripts vary considerably in length as well as content, and single lines are reassembled and integrated in other didactic verse compilations.⁶³

The *Magezoge* provides more than just a sequence of didactic maxims on various topics. Its precepts may not be structured in any systematic or even hierarchical way, but they are based on an underlying values system that applies even when the individual precepts appear at odds with one another: the author enshrines the heart as the direct link between the reader and God, the fount of all truth. Thus, the *Magezoge* aims to

60 The standard critical edition was published by Rosenhagen, *Kleinere mittelhochdeutsche Erzählungen*, pp. 21–29. All translations are mine.

61 Gärtner, 'Der Magezoge', col. 1153 lists only seven: he omits Heidelberg, UB, Cod. Pal. germ. 384, a mid-fourteenth-century codex, and Berlin, Statsbibliothek, Ms. germ. qua. 1973. The *Handschriftencensus* lists both but omits Leipzig, Universitätsbibl., Cod. 948 instead; 'Magezoge', *Handschriftencensus*.

62 Schröder, 'Der Magezoge', p. 221.

63 Gärtner, 'Der Magezoge', col. 1154.

equip its audience with the tools they will need in order to decide for themselves, in critical situations, what the right conduct would be. The poem can be rearranged to suit the situation of instruction at hand. Its lack of structure and the pithiness of its precepts makes it amenable to all kinds of alterations, as shown by the evidence of the manuscript transmission. The underlying notion of a link between God and man was unlikely to get lost in the course of such alterations, as the idea is mentioned in several parts of the poem. The narrative frame of the *Magezoge* gives indications as to the poem's (intended) primary reception, but this frame can easily be removed when a different mode of reception or audience requires it. The precepts themselves were well established. The poem compiles them and puts them at the disposal of any audience who might need them, though primarily this audience was noble sons being instructed at home, or perhaps inexperienced tutors preparing their lessons.

The voice of a tutor is also used in *Der Jüngling*, another thirteenth-century poem that collects advice on morality, conduct, and virtue.⁶⁴ The author of the lengthy poem (some 1260 lines) is Konrad von Haslau, as we know from a contemporary didactic text, the *Seifrid Helbling*. Like the authors of the *Winsbecke*-poems and the *Magezoge*, Konrad demonstrates no particular learning and must therefore be assumed to be a layman, possibly from the ranks of the *ministeriales*, who were frequently in charge of the upbringing of noble children in the Empire.⁶⁵ His main aim is to encourage *zuht* (discipline) and prevent his noble charges from *gebiurischer schande* (boorish disgrace). In practice this means that he provides a detailed list — entirely *ex negativo* — of all the behaviours deemed unacceptable in a young nobleman, from one's posture when standing in front of one's lord, to dress, expressions, and pastimes; for each misdemeanour, Konrad charges a sum in penance. Such behaviours, Konrad argues, would jeopardize the youths' honour and cause dismay, making them liable to displeasure in polite society where by rights they should strive to win favour and, possibly, patronage.

It would certainly have been beneficial if a child sent away to a court for their education already had some sense of their role upon arrival. Where parents or tutors were not able to provide such information, moral-didactic writing could be used to help. Texts addressed to young courtiers provided basic, applicable knowledge about the virtues and conduct that were supposedly treasured in noble society. Some texts specifically address the duties of boys and young men at the courts. The *Urbain le Courtois* provides detailed rules for service at the Anglo-Norman court in a poem transmitted in versions of between 234 and 320 lines, in some versions

64 Konrad von Haslau, *Der Jüngling*, ed. by Haupt.

65 Keupp, *Dienst und Verdienst*, p. 424. Blaschitz assumes that Konrad was a tutor who travelled from court to court to find employment. 'Lehrhafte Literatur als Quelle', p. 21.

introduced by a ten-line narrative section.⁶⁶ The poem is simple in its composition and loosely structured; accordingly its transmission shows a considerable degree of variation as its contents were abbreviated, altered, or expanded as needed.⁶⁷ The variations allow us to reconstruct two main versions, an 'earlier' and a 'later' one, the former addressing a young boy at an unfamiliar court and the latter aiming to teach a young man who has already gained some experience and reputation.

Both versions begin with a narrative introduction, ten lines that introduce the speaker in the poem. As before, the advice is given in the voice of a father, a *sage home de grant valour* (wise man of great worthiness) who instructs his child *de son bone sen* (in good understanding; ll. 1–6). The teaching is distinctly secular, even the mandatory rule to honour God does not, as is conventional, take precedence; instead, the boy is advised to be pleasant, behave well, and speak French. The poem details the boy's duties at the table, introduces basic rules of interaction with other courtiers, and guides him through the stages of his sojourn at court, from the first arrival through adolescence into maturity, providing him at each stage with advice on how to behave to his advantage. The text recommends basic knowledge in legal matters, which could aid his career prospects. Towards the end of the twelfth century, offices in administration increasingly became the key to social advancement for young men. Since the reign of Henry II, numerate and literate court officials had become more important to the king than warriors, since he needed clerks and accountants to help with the administration of land and the implementation of his legal reforms. While *liberi homines* could take offices in the possessory assizes, *legales milites* were necessary in the grand assizes, so legal service provided positions to sons of knightly, landed families.⁶⁸

The 'later' version of the *Urbain le Courtois* concentrates on knightly duties. It draws on the literary ideal of contemporary romances in many ways (e.g. by offering a list of literary role models and a stronger focus on courtly love) and thus promotes a more idealized model of knighthood as compared to the detailed, practical precepts in the 'earlier' version. Though many of the precepts of the earlier version are retained, the career prospects envisioned here are those of a knight, not an official, and the target audience seems to be a young man rather than a boy.

Beyond service at the courts, the centres of chivalry, there were other paths to knighthood. Service as a page to a knight offered an opportunity

66 *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons.

67 Nine manuscripts are known today, of which Parsons lists only eight; London, British Library, Harley 2253 is unknown to her. Three manuscripts date from the thirteenth century or around 1300; today, all of them are in the Bodleian Library: Selden supra 74, Ms Douce 210 and a fragment, transmitted in the flyleaf of Ms 39.

68 Turner, 'Changing Perceptions', p. 104.

to learn not just martial skill but also (hopefully) chivalric conduct, and the chance to make a good impression on social occasions, such as escorting a ruler or at tournaments. The knights were also in charge of providing the child with some kind of education, a situation used in the framing of a collection of fifteen didactic poems called *Seifried Helbling*.⁶⁹ This collection differs from other texts discussed in this book on account of its often satirical tone and the detailed commentary it offers on the condition of Austrian society in the later thirteenth century. For the history of education, this collection is interesting in that many of its poems use the narrative device of a knight being questioned on a range of topics by his page. The knight in *Seifried Helbling* explains that he has taken the page into his service and therefore owes him answers to his questions and has a duty to teach him. The narrative frame develops this relationship over the course of several poems, from the moment the page is first taken in, through several discussions and disputes, to the moment when they part ways. Poem I calls itself the *kleine Lucidarius* ('little Elucidarium'), referring to the twelfth-century Latin dialogue authored by Honorius of Autun, which conveyed the basics of Christian dogma.

While older research has considered this knight identical with the author, who expresses his critical view on the Habsburg government, Ursula Liebertz-Grün has argued that the collection has to be analysed in the context of its patronage. It was probably composed for the courts of local *Landherren*, probably the lords of Künring, who saw their own power and its expansion hindered by the territorial expansion by the Habsburg princes and the penetration of the duchy of Austria with their power.⁷⁰ It criticizes the government of these 'foreign' princes in much the same terms as those directed at the Angevin court a century earlier, including the use of *parvenus* instead of the local elites in the administration, the decline of the rule of law, and the penetration of foreign influences into local laws and customs.⁷¹

This criticism of the current political atmosphere is, however, permeated with single poems in which the knight passes on moral education and practical advice to his page and answers his questions about the use of wealth, the ideal man and woman, and the way to address lords. The most subversive lines and polemical questions are uttered by the page, but

69 Transmitted in a seventeenth-century copy of an early fourteenth-century text and fragments of a fourteenth-century manuscript; 'Seifrid Helbling' in *Handschriftencensus*. The most recent edition, *Seifried Helbling*, ed. by Seemüller, reconstructs the chronological order of the different poems, based on the development of the narrative frame and references to contemporary events. Liebertz-Grün, doubts that the *Lucidarius*-frame needs to be constructed coherently as she assumes that the poems would have been heard singly, and their order would have been less relevant. *Seifried Helbling. Satiren kontra Habsburg*, p. 6.

70 Liebertz-Grün, *Seifried Helbling. Satiren kontra Habsburg*, p. 9.

71 Turner, *Men Raised From the Dust*.

subtly confirmed by the inability of the knight to reign him in. Knight and page discuss questions of social rank and the noble revolt of 1295/1296 — the texts are certainly instructive. However, they were probably not written as an educational manual for a knight on how to instruct his page. The dialogue structure was useful to convey the more subversive messages and also to include moral teaching. The poems were probably read out separately at the courts of their patrons — nothing in their transmission suggests a wider diffusion — where political literature, satire, and moral instruction were equally welcome. This reminds us that the reception of the didactic treatises introduced above was also not tied to a certain moment. Even though they filled a gap in education generally and provided useful material for a specific period, in reality they were probably read in a variety of situations.

We see this in the manuscript transmission. *Der Jüngling* was transmitted in three manuscripts from the fourteenth century,⁷² all of them collections of moral, religious, or satirical lyric verse; one of them includes the famous law book *Sachsenspiegel* (Lepizig, Ms. 946). They all transmit a mix of entertaining poems and moralizing and educational texts; Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 341, for instance, includes a German *Cato*. *Winsbecke* and *Winsbeckin* were both included in the lavishly illustrated *Codex Manesse* (Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 348) where they feature along with lyrical poetry penned by illustrious authors such as the famous Walther von der Vogelweide and (supposedly) the Hohenstaufen king Henry IV. The departure of a son or a daughter coming of age provided a standard occasion for instruction and this moment frequently set the scene in the didactic texts, but they could have been read at any time: at court, during meals, by a teacher or parent, to an audience of noble children, or to the entire household. Entertainment and teaching were so frequently interwoven that it has been claimed that all medieval literature was, at its core, didactic.⁷³ Education did not end when a person reached maturity and the teaching of morality and good conduct could be and was addressed to nobles of any age and rank.

Lifelong Learning

Many moral-didactic texts targeted an adult readership or were unspecific about their intended readers and could thus be of interest to audiences of different ages, clerical or lay, from princes to lower nobility. Some texts included precepts for different groups within the same text, indicating

⁷² Cologny-Genf, Bibl. Bodmeriana, Cod. Bodm. 72; Heidelberg, UB, Cod. Pal. germ. 341; and Leipzig, Universitätsbibl., Ms. 946. All date from the fourteenth century.

⁷³ Kössinger and Wittig, *Prodesse et delectare*, p. 1.

that the entire courtly community could have listened to such instruction. A number of Latin texts originally meant for a learned audience gained the attention of lay readers and were translated into the vernaculars. Some moral writing was, however, specifically written for an audience of powerful adult noblemen and women, sometimes even addressed to a specific ruler.

Mirrors of Princes

The practice of addressing advice to and admonishing a ruler existed since the early Middle Ages. The Carolingian court received admonishments on the art of rulership in the works of Jonas von Orleans (*De institutione regia*), Sedulius Scottus (*Liber de rectoribus Christianis*), and Hincmar of Reims (*De regis persona et regio ministerio ad Carolum Calvum regem* and *Admonitio ad episcopos et ad regem Karlomannum*), among others.⁷⁴ As the Carolingian Empire broke apart, the tradition dried up, only to be revived in the high medieval period in several places almost simultaneously.⁷⁵

The high medieval literature proffering advice to rulers is termed by modern scholars the 'Mirrors of Princes' genre,⁷⁶ though not every work applies the image of the mirror.⁷⁷ The first works of this type appeared in the twelfth century in England and the Empire and were written by clerics. John of Salisbury wrote his *Policraticus* before 1159; the work covers a wide range of topics, from political theory to moral virtues and the manners of kings and knights to categories of learning.⁷⁸ It is most famous for introducing the body politic metaphor in which the king is the head that rules the body, whereas the clerics form its soul and are therefore not wholly governed by the forces that rule the body.⁷⁹ In this work, John did not just advise the king and the aristocracy in their duties to rule the kingdom but also addressed the balance between secular and ecclesiastical power. Though the work is commonly considered a *speculum regum*, it is actually only Chapters 3 to 11 of the fourth book in which the virtues and duties of the ideal king are described. The work is dedicated to Thomas Becket, chancellor to Henry II, who is known to have educated young aristocrats at his household and later became the educator of the

⁷⁴ Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, p. 17.

⁷⁵ High medieval speculum-literature continued the Carolingian tradition, cf. Bell, *L'ideal éthique*.

⁷⁶ Bell, *L'ideal éthique*, pp. 8–13; Bagge, *The Political Thought of the King's Mirror*, p. 19; for an overview of the genre, see Jónsson, *Le miroir*.

⁷⁷ 'Wide' definition by Berges, *Fürstenspiegel*. On the image of the 'mirror', cf. Roth, 'Spiegelliteratur', col. 2101; Bradley, 'Backgrounds of the Title Speculum', pp. 100–15; Grabes, *Speculum, Mirror und Looking-Glass*.

⁷⁸ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. by Keats-Rohan.

⁷⁹ Nederman and Campbell, 'Priests, Kings, and Tyrants', pp. 572–90.

king's eldest son, Prince Henry. Upon its completion in 1159, Thomas was still Lord Chancellor to Henry II, so we may assume that the complex work was really meant to provide Thomas with material in support of his responsibilities at the royal court and as advisor to the king.⁸⁰

At the end of the century, Gerald of Wales composed his *De Principis Instructione*, a mixture of moral instruction for kings (Book I) and an extensive report on Henry II's rulership and his struggles both with his sons and with the French crown (Book II and III). Gerald's ideal reader is the heir to the French throne, Louis (VII), whom he favoured as king of England. Unlike John's treatise, there is no coherent political theory in Gerald's work but its first book is structured as a discussion of the virtues a king should possess, infused with anecdotes. He uses the metaphor of a mirror to explain his combination of *adhortatio* and historiography, since, like a mirror, the deeds of his ancestors may inspire the ruler to reflect on which actions he should imitate and which he should shun.⁸¹

A similar approach to the education of kings was taken by the Dominican Godfrey of Viterbo, chaplain to King Conrad III and later notary at the imperial court of Frederick I. Godfrey was a prolific writer of predominantly historiographical works, culminating in his *opus maius*, the *Pantheon* (1187). In his *Speculum regum*, addressed in 1185 to the young Henry VI, he emphasized the need for a king to be learned (*scientia litterarum* and *regia litteratura*) and to study philosophy, so that when he came to rule he would not depend on the interpretation of others more learned than himself.⁸² For this reason, Godfrey offers him the deeds of the kings of history so that he may consult them and learn from the past, just as Gerald described. But moreover, Gottfried constructs an uninterrupted line from the Trojans to the Hohenstaufen kings via Charlemagne — a *translatio imperii* — so that the text serves not just for the edification of Henry but also the legitimation of the Hohenstaufen imperial rule.

In the German parts of the Empire, this work remains unique as a mirror of princes, while in northern Italy, a rich *podestà*-literature begins with the work of John of Viterbo, moving into the vernacular in the thirteenth century with Brunetto Latini's *Trésor*, and continues to address imperial rulership in the fourteenth century in works such as those of Marsilius of Padua. The *speculum*-literature of the thirteenth century became a phenomenon strongly focused on the French court.

Vincent of Beauvais, whose educational treatise I have discussed above, was also the author of several works of political theory that address the way the government should be organized. Vincent was a prolific writer whose writings addressed theology but also natural philosophy, historiography,

80 Barrau, "Ceci n'est pas un miroir", p. 105.

81 Gerald of Wales, *De Principis Instructione*, ed. by Bartlett, p. 145.

82 Gottfried of Viterbo, *Speculum regum*, ed. by Waitz, pp. 21–93.

and the ethics of government, later combined in his *Speculum maius*.⁸³ Among three works he addressed to the French royal court was his *De morali principis institutione*, completed sometime after 1260.⁸⁴ This and his *De eruditione* were meant to be combined in his political *opus maius* on 'the status of the prince and the entire royal court, and on the administration of the commonwealth and the governance of the whole realm' — *Opus universale de statu principis*.⁸⁵ His ambitions went well beyond the teaching of morality, as he aimed to reform the government of France into a system ruled by reason and superior administration. Perhaps his ambitions were too lofty, or perhaps he overestimated the erudition of his royal addressees: the work seems to have been of interest mainly to clerics and scholars.⁸⁶ Only a generation later, it was surpassed by a work that combined the traditional 'mirror' with an interest in education and the organization of government, which circulated widely in Latin and in a French translation, and the impact of which continued to be felt well into the late Middle Ages, in vernacular didactic texts but also texts for entertainment: *De regimine principum* by Giles of Rome.⁸⁷

Giles's work also addressed the French royal court. Though *De regimine principum* is structured along similar lines as *De eruditione*, we note a shift in both pedagogy and the perception of the ideal government between the two texts, divided by less than a generation. The Augustinian Giles was, in his day, most famous for his commentary on the ethical and political works of Aristotle, which had only recently been rediscovered by Latin medieval authors and systematized by, among others, Thomas Aquinas, under whom Giles studied in Paris. *De regimine principum*, composed around 1280, is dedicated to the young Philip IV, whose father Philip III ordered a French translation to be made as early as 1282.⁸⁸

The conception and the use of *auctoritates* in *De regimine* is a novelty. Just as Vincent did in *De eruditione*, Giles supports his thoughts extensively with quotations, but instead of scripture, the Church fathers and classical *auctoritates*, *De regimine* is solidly based on Aristotle's *Ethics*, *Politics*, and

83 Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum maius*, published in Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum quadruplex*. On his ethics of government cf. Bernard, 'Fides et royauté chez les moralistes du XIII^e siècle', pp. 225–37.

84 Vincent of Beauvais, *De morali principis institutione*, ed. by Schneider.

85 Vincent of Beauvais, *De morali principis institutione*, ed. by Schneider, p. xxi.

86 Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p. 93.

87 *De regimine* has even shaped more recent definitions of the 'Mirror of Princes' genre: namely in the taxonomy of Jean-Philippe Genet, who contrasts earlier works with *Mirrors in strictu sensu*, pedagogic works allied to the framework of the Mendicant preoccupation with lay education, which look at politics as part of practical theology (rather than rhetoric) and are firmly based in Aristotelianism. *De regimine* fits either of these definitions perfectly. Genet, 'General Introduction', p. xiv.

88 Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum*, p. 9.

Rhetoric. Giles makes use of Aquinas's commentaries on these works and draws on other sources like Vegetius's *De re militari*, whereas the scriptures, the psalms, and the Church fathers are cited only once.⁸⁹ Accordingly, the image of the ruler's education takes a new shape. Following Aristotle, Giles describes monarchy as the perfect form of government, if a ruler is virtuous. To ensure that the king pursues the 'common good' above all, virtues must be inculcated in him early on by capable masters, so that virtue becomes a habit. Giles structures his work in three parts: one on ethics, one on the *oeconomia* (the government of the household, which includes his perspective on the education of aristocratic children), and one on politics.

The success of *De regimine* surpassed that of Vincent's treatise by far, and unlike the latter, Giles work enjoyed a large readership among the lay aristocracy of not only France but all medieval Europe. The manuscripts that transmit the French translation by Henri de Gauchi before and around 1300 surpass those containing the Latin original, which became more numerous only in the fourteenth century in the context of the university book trade.⁹⁰ It was known all across Western Europe, as dated manuscripts from England (1313), Spain (1340s), and the German Empire (mid-fourteenth century) testify. Including the one commissioned by Philip III from Henri de Gauchi, seven French translations exist; an anonymous translation was also found in the library of Charles V.⁹¹ By the end of the fourteenth century, Henri's version had been translated again, this time into Italian (1288), and five more Italian translations followed. Further translations were made into Castilian (1345 and late fourteenth century), Catalan (1343), Portuguese (1438), and Hebrew (a partial and a full translation, c. 1400). A German adaptation circulated under the name *Katharina divina* (1370s); five other German translations were executed in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, including one in Lower German (1385).⁹² Translations in Flemish, Swedish, and several in English are transmitted from around the same time.⁹³ Henri's French translation alone is transmitted in thirty manuscripts.⁹⁴ Today, around 350 manuscripts of the Latin version are known.⁹⁵ If Giles had envisioned his work to be read

89 Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum*, p. 11.

90 Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum*, p. 13.

91 Perret, *Les traductions françaises*, pp. 61–87.

92 Perret, *Les traductions françaises*, pp. 39–41.

93 Perret, *Les traductions françaises*, pp. 41–43.

94 *Li Livres du gouvernement des rois*, ed. by Molenaer.

95 This large number of witnesses and their variation in terms of abbreviations and expansions, especially in the context of its reception as a book for study at the universities, have hindered efforts to compile a modern edition. To this day, most scholars refer to the edition published in 1482 by Stephanus Plannck. A partial edition, including only Book III, based on a sixteenth-century print, was published as Giles of Rome, *De regimine principum*.

out to noble sons at the table, as one manuscript states, there is every chance that this was successful.⁹⁶

The success and the breadth of circulation was surpassed by only one other work of a comparable nature, and one that transcends all political contexts: the *Secretum secretorum*.⁹⁷ Medieval readers considered this text the advice of Aristotle to his pupil, Alexander the Great. The text emerged in the Middle Ages in the form of the Arabic *Sirr al-Asrar* (Secret of Secrets), which claims to be a translation of a Greek letter by Aristotle. It is, however, an original Arabic composition; no Greek original existed.⁹⁸ Some political concepts in the *Sirr al-Asrar* seem to descend from Persian political theory instead, combined with Persian and Greek philosophy and material from the Alexander Romances.⁹⁹ Being rooted in a shared culturally dominant philosophy — Aristotelianism — the knowledge and advice transmitted in the text applied surprisingly well to a medieval European context. The figures of Alexander the Great and Aristotle commanded prestige in both the East and the West.¹⁰⁰ The texts transmit a curious mix of statecraft, hermetic sciences, astrology, and health advice. An early translation of the medical knowledge was made in the mid-twelfth century by John of Seville; a full translation by Philip of Tripoli followed in around 1230. In the last third of the thirteenth century, the great Franciscan scholar Roger Bacon produced an edition of the text with a commentary, presumably for the court of the English king Henry III, presenting the text as a mirror of princes.¹⁰¹ As such, it was read by a great number of aristocrats who commissioned copies of the text, and translations (full and partial) were made in several vernacular languages early on. Up to the end of the fifteenth century, we find two Dutch, ten English, eleven French, seven German, four Italian, one Portuguese, and four Spanish translations (taking into account both full and partial translations).¹⁰² Among these translations and adaptations, several French, Italian, Dutch, and German texts date to before 1310. In 1266, Jacob of Maerlant made

96 'Explicit liber De regimine principum editus a fratre Egidio Romano ordinis fratrum heremitarum sancti Augustini, qui deberet frequenter legi in mensa ut dicitur in fine secundi libri'. London, Lambeth Palace Libr. 150, fol. 98^v, quoted in Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum*, p. 1.

97 *Secretum secretorum*, ed. by Steele. The most comprehensive study of the work and its scholarly influence is Williams, *The Secret of Secrets*; for its European transmission specifically, cf. Grignaschi, 'La diffusion du "Secretum secretorum"', pp. 7–70.

98 See Campopiano, 'A Philosopher between East and West', p. 283, for an overview of the complex origins and transmission of the text in East and West.

99 Darling, 'Mirrors for Princes', p. 230.

100 Campopiano, 'Secret Knowledge for Political and Social Harmony', pp. 39–56.

101 Williams, 'Roger Bacon', p. 67.

102 Williams, 'The Vernacular Tradition', pp. 451–82, Appendix 1, pp. 469–81. Sections of the *Secretum secretorum* have been translated into Welsh and included in medical handbooks of the fourteenth century: see Fulton, 'A "Mirror of the Gentry"', p. 63.

an abbreviated version for Floris V, count of Holland and Zeeland, in which he retains only the ethical and political sections, which exhort the reader to bring about justice in the world, govern the country well, and live a honourable life.¹⁰³ To this poet we also owe a Middle Dutch translation of Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*, dedicated to the same count, an Alexander romance, and a greatly expanded translation of the *Roman de Troie* of Benoît de Sainte-Maure, among many other works.¹⁰⁴ Shortly after Maerlant, in 1270, Pierre d'Abernun translated the *Secretum secretorum* into Anglo-Norman couplets for an English noble patron.¹⁰⁵ As his Latin copy was incomplete, Pierre includes Rhazes' *Liber Almansoris* instead, a twelfth-century translation of the *Kitab al-Mansouri*, an Arabic medical treatise. He also supplies a moralizing conclusion: the pagan virtues promoted by Aristotle must be supplemented by the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Pierre, a cleric from a knightly family in Surrey, is also known for his translation of the *Elucidarium* of Honorius (called 'of Autun'), translated as *Lumere as Lais* (Light for the Laity), which he expanded with material from Peter the Lombard's *Sententiae*. This translation is transmitted in sixteen manuscripts.¹⁰⁶ In 1282, the nun Hiltgart von Hürnheim translated the *Secretum secretorum* into German at the request of her brother Rudolf, leaving out anything she deemed too complicated, focusing on the dietary advice and dedicating her translation to the imperial court.¹⁰⁷ The adaptation by the Dominican Jofroid de Waterford, made around 1300 with the assistance of the scribe Servais Copale, was dedicated to an unnamed nobleman.¹⁰⁸ It includes moral education, advice on personal hygiene, and guidance on the composition of a king's entourage. Jofroid subtracts most of the scientific background and the occult sciences but adds excerpts from translations of scholarly works on virtues, such as those of Martin of Braga and John of Wales.¹⁰⁹ Jofroid was also the translator of Dares Phrygius's *De excidio Troiae historia* and Eutrope's *Breviarum historiae romanae*, and penned several sermons himself.

103 Jacob von Maerlant, *Heimelijkheid der Heimelikheden*, ed. by Verdenius, p. 116.

104 Biesheuvel, *Maerlants werk*, pp. 225–28.

105 Pierre d'Abernun of Fetcham, *Le Secr   de Secrez*, ed. by Beckerlegge. It is transmitted in two manuscripts: one dates from the thirteenth century (Paris, BnF, fr., 25407, fols 173va–197rb), the other is an eighteenth century copy of an earlier manuscript (Paris, BnF, Arsenal, 3123).

106 Pierre d'Abernun of Fetcham, *La lumere as lais*, ed. by Hesketh.

107 Hiltgart von H  rnheim, *Mittelhochdeutsche Prosa  bersetzung des 'Secretum secretorum'*, ed. by M  ller.

108 *The French Works of Jofroi de Waterford: Dares Phrygius, 'L'Estoire des Troiens'; Eutropius, 'L'Estoire des Romains'; Pseudo-Aristotle, 'Le Secre de Secres'*, ed. by Busby.

109 Williams, 'The Vernacular Tradition', p. 470.

Translations of the text total almost 120, in addition to over 500 Latin copies and fifty in Arabic.¹¹⁰ We know of a range of royal and aristocratic readers — male and female — who owned copies of the text, both in vernacular translations and, in the later Middle Ages, also in Latin.¹¹¹ The success of the text was partly due to the breadth of topics it covered — learned readers were interested in the scientific discussions, whereas lay readers preferred the political and ethical advice¹¹² — but also due to the central roles of Alexander and Aristotle, who became the models of ruler and advisor in the high medieval period.

Judith Ferster has convincingly argued that the conventional forms and contents of the *specula* provided their authors with a means of covertly criticizing contemporary political issues.¹¹³ Advising kings was central to the self-image of the higher clergy just as much as taking advice played a central role in the ideal of kingship, and in its just and learned image.¹¹⁴ This relationship of mutual benefit between higher clergy and royalty had a long history and was well established before the reforms of the Church in the thirteenth century. Kings and queens could rely on regular consultations with their confessors, who made sure that moral development continued into the adult life. The court clergy saw it as their duty to correct rulers in their secular lives. We see this in the mirrors of princes, but also in other works composed by bishops for a royal court, such as Étienne de Fougères's *Livre des manières*.

The *Livre des manières* was written around 1170 and is therefore one of the earliest texts to specifically address aristocratic society in a vernacular language. Its author, Étienne de Fougères (*mestre Esteinvre de Fougieres*), was chaplain at the court of Henry II and later became bishop of Rennes.¹¹⁵ The *Livre* is transmitted as 1343 lines in a single manuscript, Angers, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 295, fols 141–50, which is unfortunately damaged and in parts barely legible.¹¹⁶ It is dedicated to Cecile, Countess of Hereford, to whose family Étienne was related, but it ultimately targets the aristocratic society of the royal court of Henry II.¹¹⁷ Composed in the form of a sermon *ad status* that addresses the sins of

110 *Secretum Secretorum: Nine English Versions*, ed. by Manzalaoui, p. 14.

111 Williams, 'The Vernacular Tradition' and Williams, 'Giving Advice and Taking It', p. 150.

112 Williams, 'The Vernacular Tradition', p. 162.

113 Ferster, *Fictions of Advice* for later medieval *speculum principum*. Nederman, 'The Mirror Crack'd', has shown that some less conventional Mirrors of Princes transgressed the traditional limitations of the *speculum*-literature in order to overtly criticize politics.

114 Weiler, 'Clerical admonitio'.

115 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. and trans. by Thomas is the most recent edition, with extensive notes and a modern French translation. Thomas refers to the readings of all previous editions.

116 Langlois, *La vie en France au Moyen Age*, II, 1–26 (p. 4).

117 Short, 'Patrons and Polyglots', p. 240.

different social groups, Étienne condemns the transgressions each group is most likely to commit and which cause the most harm to the social harmony, and admonishes them to fulfil their rightful tasks in the divine order of the world.

The *Livre* addresses the duties of different social groups and laments the frequent wrongdoings of each one. Étienne begins with the sins of kings, pointing out that they are the heads of society, and then discusses clerics (bishops, archbishops, the pope and the cardinals, and finally the secular clergy and diocesan priests), the knights who comprise the entire lay nobility, the peasants, the *bourgeoisie*, and finally women (this part being organized by virtues and vices rather than social class or marital status).

We know many more details about the origin of the *Livre des manières* than about other works. While it is not always the case that authors mention their names in their works or that their name is transmitted in some other way, French authors more often leave us their names than German ones. Authors' names are more often transmitted when the author is a cleric and the text conveys religious knowledge as opposed to secular instruction.¹¹⁸ The authority of the doctrine and the clerical responsibility for the salvation of the laity allow clerical writers to present their works in their own names. Étienne, who worked at the chancellery of King Henry II from 1157 to 1167, would have been used to signing a work with his own name: a large number of manuscripts survive which were redacted by him.¹¹⁹ In January 1168, Étienne was promoted to the episcopal see of Rennes, a position he held until his death in 1178, as we know from a passage in the chronicle of Robert de Torigni: *Obiit Stephanus vir honestus et literatus, episcopus redonensis*.¹²⁰ The *Livre* was written sometime after Étienne's promotion, and he might well have considered it in line with his new position to advise the royal court he knew so intimately from his years in the chancellery.

Teaching Nobility

The mirrors of princes were not the only texts by learned authors that piqued the interest of the lay nobility. Among the first vernacular adaptations of distinctly secular Latin writing was the *Moralium dogma philosophorum*. Its circulation tells us much about the changing require-

118 Glauch notes of German literature that mentioning the author's name in the third person is a characteristic of spiritual-religious poetry; Glauch, *An der Schwelle zur Literatur*, p. 48. See also Unzeitig, *Autorname und Autorschaft*.

119 Lodge, 'Manuscripts et édition', pp. 12–16.

120 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des Manières*, ed. by Thomas, p. 9.

ments of moral didacticism and the differences between audiences of the twelfth and late thirteenth centuries.

The treatise was written in the mid-twelfth century, perhaps by William of Conches.¹²¹ The French philosopher taught at Chartres and Paris and was a tutor to Henry Plantagenet, the future King Henry II. One of the reasons William is considered its author is that the work is addressed to a *uir optime et liberalis*, but some manuscripts insert *Henrice R.*, perhaps referring to William's tutee. Indeed, the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* could be and has been read as a mirror of princes, but its advice is relevant to a broad audience of both laymen and clerics. As Cary Nederman writes,

Perhaps no twelfth century text concerning social and political philosophy enjoyed a larger readership, and a greater amount of plundering, in subsequent centuries than the *Moralium*, a collection containing snippets of wisdom derived mainly from Roman philosophers and poets as well as the Church fathers (on occasion) and scripture (even less frequently).¹²²

The treatise is based on the structure of Cicero's *De officiis*, which is supplemented with a wide range of other *auctoritates* to provide a systematic treatment of the virtues of a statesman. The text begins with a proem, followed by the body of the text (headed *De consilii capiendi deliberatione*) introducing the importance of taking counsel before making decisions. This counsel must take into account three things: *honor, utilitas*, and situations of conflict between the two.

The text is structured around the opposition between honour and usefulness and their various sub-categories. The *conclusio operis* reconciles the apparent opposition and concludes that the honourable is always also useful. It explicitly encourages the reader to use these reflections as guidelines for an honourable life, rather than mere philosophical reflections.¹²³

Given the general interest in classical ethics in lay society and the connection the treatise draws between honour and success in the world, it is no surprise that it soon began to take on a life outside the learned circles of the School of Chartres. Its was adapted into German shortly after its composition. Wernher von Elmendorf based his *Tugendspiegel* on the *buoch* (which he does not name) in c. 1170. The poem was written at the request of Dietrich of Elmendorf, who was provost in Heiligenstadt, a

121 *Das Moraliū dogma philosophorum*, ed. by Holmberg, who ascribes its authorship to William of Conches (p. 7). Delhay, in 'Un adaption du *De officiis* du XII^e siècle', argues for William's authorship. Arguments for anonymous authorship are found in Williams, 'The Quest for the Author'. For a summary of the discussion, see Caiazzo, 'Rex illiteratus est quasi asinus coronatus', pp. 375–77.

122 Nederman, *The Bonds of Humanity*, p. 55.

123 Nederman, *The Bonds of Humanity*, p. 60.

town in Thuringia which was part of the archbishopric of Mainz. Schröder has identified the provost in a list of witnesses in a charter issued 1171 by Archbishop Christian of Mainz.¹²⁴ His chaplain Wernher reorganizes his source considerably, dissolving its structure entirely, especially the opposition of *utilis* and *honestum*. In his work, *frum und ere* (usefulness and honour) are united from the beginning and he reconfigures the abstract systematics as specific precepts, often written in clear imperatives. The entire text is designed to offer applicable advice rather than learned reflections. Only two manuscripts of the *Tugendspiegel* survive: a twelfth-century fragment comprising two double leaves, today Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Ms. germ. oct. 226 (B), and one almost complete text from the fourteenth century, now Stiftsbibliothek Klosterneuburg Cod. 1056 (A).¹²⁵ As his emphasis on taking counsel demonstrates (along with precepts on how to organize one's army), Wernher envisioned an aristocratic audience of little erudition whom he wanted to advise in the basics of virtuous conduct when executing their power.

The next translation of the *Moralium dogma* met with much more success. The *Livre de Moralités* or *Moralitéz des philosophes* is a mid-thirteenth translation into French prose which remains close to its Latin source.¹²⁶ This genuine translation was immensely popular: not only is it transmitted in more than fifty manuscripts,¹²⁷ but it sparked a number of translations and reworkings itself, many of which still date to the thirteenth century. Manuscripts of the French translation circulated in Italy soon after it was made and by the end of the century, translations into Italian, Gascon, and Castilian had been produced.¹²⁸ A Middle Dutch rendering also dates from the late thirteenth century and replaces the prologue of the French prose text with a prologue of the *Bestiaire d'Amour* by Richard de Fournival.¹²⁹ Also roughly contemporary is a *mise-en-verse* by Alard de Cambrai, the *Livre de philosophie et de moralité*, which not only alters the literary form but adds additional material (from the *Disticha Catonis*, the *Roman d'Alexandre*, and Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*, among other works), adds rubrics to structure his material, and includes moralizing summaries to help his audience align the classical ethics with a Christian framework.¹³⁰ His main concern is the teaching of practical virtue to an

124 Schröder, 'Zu Wernher von Elmendorf', p. 78.

125 Wernher von Elmendorf, *Tugendspiegel*, ed. by Bumke.

126 *Das Moraliū dogma philosophorum*, ed. by Holmberg, pp. 84–182.

127 Holmberg knew of 38 manuscripts. The most recent account has been made by Battagliola, who could verify 58 manuscripts; see 'Tradizione e traduzioni', pp. 95–97.

128 Battagliola, 'Tradizione e traduzioni', pp. 149–55.

129 *Das Moraliū dogma philosophorum*, ed. by Holmberg, pp. 85–183. The codex that transmits the text includes another Bestiary and is richly illustrated, indicating an aristocratic patron. *Niederrheinisches Morallbuch*, Hannover, Landesbibl., Ms. IV 369.

130 Alard de Cambrai, *Le livre de philosophie et de moralité*, ed. by Payen.

audience of aristocratic laymen and, like Wernher, he is not interested in the philosophical connection between the virtues.¹³¹ Alard's versification is transmitted in eleven manuscripts.¹³² In the fourteenth century, Jean Mielot restructured the French prose again for his patron Charles V, and an Old Norse version is equally based on the *Moralitez*.

The distribution of the *Moralitez des philosophes* exceeds that of any other vernacular didactic text of the period and the number of manuscripts dating from the thirteenth century can compete with the Latin source, an impressive total given that this circulation was achieved in only thirty years. This shows us that while there was a trend for simplifying and adapting learned writing to suit the immediate needs of the aristocracy, there was also, by the thirteenth century, an interest in the philosophical foundations of classical ethics. Both the early German and the later French verse adaptation record the names of the classical authors they cite, but here it seems that the names alone suffice to lend their works authority. Readers of the prose translation, however, followed the scholastic reasoning and its interest in categorizations. In France and Italy, this readership must have been numerous and probably included not only educated laymen but also clerics who preferred to read the text in the vernacular.

No original vernacular composition reached this degree of popularity in the period, but a number of texts addressed a general audience of aristocratic adults, and in the course of the thirteenth century these, too, increased in complexity and scope. By far the most comprehensive thirteenth-century vernacular treatment of moral values, courtly behaviour, and judgements about right and wrong is the book-length poetic treatise named by its author *Der Welsche Gast* (The Italian Guest).¹³³ This wide-ranging work (running to 14,752 lines and structured in ten parts) was written by the cleric Thomasin of Zirklare from Friuli in northern Italy in the winter of 1215–1216.

Thomasin provides us with a fair amount of information about himself in his book: he tells us his name and that he is from Friuli. That Thomasin wrote the book in the winter of 1215–1216 can be deduced from his reference to Saladin's conquest of the Holy Sepulchre, twenty-eight years earlier. The book was finished within ten months and was intended to instruct *vrume rîtr, guote vrouwen, wise phaffen* (respectable knights, good ladies, wise priests, ll. 14695–96). We know Thomasin was a cleric because

¹³¹ Jung, 'À propos de la moralité', p. 504.

¹³² Arlima, 'Alart de Cambrai', https://www.arlima.net/ad/Alard_de_cambrai.html (accessed 8 August 2020).

¹³³ The standard edition is *Der Welsche Gast des Thomasin von Zirklaria*, ed. by Rückert. The full text was made available by the 'Welscher Gast Digital' project at the University of Heidelberg. An English translation was provided by Gibbs and McConnell in *The Italian Guest*. The most recent comprehensive study is Schanze, *Tugendlehre und Wissensvermittlung*.

his name occurs in a document that connects him to the court of the Patriarch of Aquileia: the *Nekrologium Aquileiense* notes that *Thomasinus de Corclara Canonicus obiit qui dedit fratribus Curiam I in Aquilegia*.¹³⁴ Thomasin also tells us that he wrote another book, *Von der hüfscheit* (On courtliness, 1174), a book of romantic advice which he extensively quotes in Part One of the *Welscher Gast*. There has been some discussion about the language of the book. Thomasin refers to the book, as well as himself, as *welsh*. This could both mean that the book was written in Italian or Provençal, a common literary language in northern Italy at the time.

The book was copied many times in Germany: twenty-five manuscripts survive, nine of them as fragments; five more are attested.¹³⁵ Thirteen manuscripts have programmes of illustrations, four others leave spaces for images which were never executed; in another manuscript, the space left for images was filled with descriptions.¹³⁶ It seems that the images were already planned by Thomasin, as he refers to one of them in the text (ll. 11970–71). This is supported by the evidence of the oldest manuscript, Heidelberg Cod. Pal. Germ. 389, which already contains the full cycle of images. Moreover, the transmission of the images is surprisingly coherent: they are inserted in the same positions across the different manuscripts and their composition is very stable throughout the work's transmission.¹³⁷

Der Welsche Gast is divided into ten parts with varying numbers of chapters, introduced by a verse prologue and ending in a short epilogue.¹³⁸ Many manuscripts transmit a preface in prose, written by the author himself, perhaps in his own later redaction of the work.¹³⁹ Like the authors discussed earlier, Thomasin draws on the *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, but in *Der Welsche Gast* it is only one of many Latin sources. Thomasin also makes use of Alain de Lille's *Anticlaudianus* and *De rerum natura*, John of Salisbury's *Metalogicon*, and the *Moralia* by Pope Gregory the Great, which is the only source he mentions by name.¹⁴⁰ Like Wernher, Thomasin

134 Cormeau, 'Thomasin von Zerklære'; Willms, *Der Wälsche Gast*, p. 3: 'The canonicus Tomasini of Cerclaria died who gave the brothers a court in Aquileia.'

135 Cormeau, 'Thomasin von Zerklære', col. 897. For the different redactions, see the contribution by Starkey, 'The Question of Reading'; Starkey explains crucial changes in the manuscripts as they were prepared for different modes of reception.

136 Cormeau, 'Thomasin von Zerklære', col. 897.

137 The image cycle has received a lot of attention, ever since the earliest scholarship: cf. the contributions to Wenzel and Lechtermann, ed., *Beweglichkeit der Bilder*. Starkey, *A Courtier's Mirror* worked in particular on the manuscript Gotha, Forschungsbibl. Memb. I 120. A virtual library of 24 illustrated manuscripts is available via *Welscher Gast digital*.

138 A synopsis in German of the ten parts and the prologue are provided by Ruff, *Der Wälsche Gast des Thomasin von Zerklære*, and in English by Starkey, *A Courtier's Mirror*, pp. 153–95 (referring to the Gotha manuscript).

139 Cormeau, 'Thomasin von Zerklære', col. 897. Starkey, however, regards the preface as a later addendum (*A Courtier's Mirror*, p. 35).

140 Classen, 'Thomasin von Zerklære', pp. 625–26.

omits the hierarchic structure of the virtues found in the *Moralium dogma* and chooses only certain aspects from that text. Compared to Wernher, his choice is much more selective: *Der Welsche Gast* is not a translation or even an adaptation, but a compilation of didactic content for which Thomasin, as he says in his prologue, consciously combined set pieces from other works in order to assemble his own creation, like a *guot zimberman* (good carpenter, l. 105). In the epilogue, Thomasin gives his book its title (*welscher gast*, ll. 14681, 14709) and sends it out in the world, where it should find the right audience, good people who are willing to receive instruction. He envisions the book on the knees of a father who reads it out to his household, but it was certainly appropriate for a courtly audience as well. The division in books, the rubrics, and the rich illustrations in most manuscripts all indicate a reading audience, but the text works just as well without these apparatus. As the book offers advice for young people, a brief mirror of princes, and more elaborate philosophical argumentation in separate parts, its reading could easily be tailored according to the audience.

The separation into more general instruction and specific precepts for aristocratic audiences was also a feature of the *Doctrinal Sauvage*. Among the original vernacular compositions analysed in this study, the poem called *Doctrinal Sauvage* is the one that survives in the most copies: thirty-two manuscripts are extant.¹⁴¹ It was one of the most successful French didactic texts of the period.¹⁴² The *Doctrinal* is transmitted in a short version of 317 lines and several longer versions, with varying numbers of additional stanzas. It was written before 1267 in Artois and circulated widely in France, Flanders, and England.¹⁴³ Its contents — instruction about good conduct and courtly manners — were apparently equally popular across north-western Europe. On the basis of the explicit in several manuscripts (*Explicit le Doctrinaus Sauvage*) it is ascribed to Sauvage d'Arras, the author of a *chanson* and the *Dit de Dame Guile*, who is known to have died in 1305.¹⁴⁴ Arras was a centre for vernacular culture in the thirteenth century, since it boasted a strong economy and a high level of literacy thanks to the

141 *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari. Sakari lists 30 manuscripts (pp. 38–39). Hunt, in 'Le *Doctrinal Sauvage*: Another Manuscript' later identified a 'sermon' in Cambridge University Library, MS Hh. 3.11 as a version of the *Doctrinal*. Dean indicates another manuscript, Princeton, Taylor Medieval Manuscript 12, which is not mentioned in Sakari's edition; Dean, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 137.

142 Gröber, ed., *Grundriss der romanischen Philologie*, p. 862.

143 *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, pp. 7, 12. We know that it was written before 1267 because one of the earliest witnesses, Paris, BnF, fr. 25408, carries this date written in a contemporary hand (*Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, p. 45).

144 Berger, *Littérature et société*, p. 441. Cf. Segre, 'Les forms et tradition didactiques', tome 1 (partie historique), pp. 88–89 and tome 2 (partie documentaire), p. 135, item 2708, in which Segre identifies Sauvage d'Arras as the author of the *Doctrinal*.

influence of the Abbey of Saint Vaast.¹⁴⁵ As the earliest dated manuscript is from 1267, we have a *terminus ante quem* for its composition; its editor Sakari suggests that the poem was written around the year 1260.¹⁴⁶ The poem addresses its audiences as *seigneurs* and offers general advice on virtue and conduct in its first part (twenty-two stanzas in Sakari's edition) before going into situations specifically relevant to an aristocratic audience, exploring the concept of the *preudome* — that is, the various ways in which aristocrats present themselves as noble and valorous. In this discussion, the *Doctrinal* essentially legitimizes noble lifestyles and defends them against implicit reproaches of excessive splendour and vanity, among them the common argument that the knightly classes are needed for the defence of Christianity against the Saracens and for the distribution of justice. The *Doctrinal* is unique among high medieval didactic poems in its defence of all aspects of noble splendour. Typically, didactic writing of the period focuses more on aspirational morals for the nobility when addressing the highest ranks of society or emphasizes service and reputation when aiming to instruct the lower nobility and *ministeriales*.

A more idealistic approach is taken by the didactic poems of Robert de Blois, which convey a message of virtue that is connected to, on the one hand, the ideal of knighthood in the *Enseignement des princes*, and on the other, the duties of a married noblewomen in the *Chastoiement des dames*. The works of Robert de Blois remain curiously understudied. After some initial interest in the 1880s from Meyer and a first edition by Ulrich, Robert's various poems met with little attention until a new edition by Fox was published in 1950.¹⁴⁷ Robert composed narrative, lyric, religious, and didactic poetry. Most of his works are transmitted in manuscript compilations.¹⁴⁸ Robert teaches courtly values from a clerical perspective: his poetic corpus transmits a pair of didactic poems — the *Enseignement des princes* and the *Chastoiement des dames* — and a third, the *Chanson*

145 Berger, *Littérature et société*, p. 110.

146 *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, p. 37.

147 We know of at least three redactions in Robert's works: one represented by Arsenal 5201, another in BnF, fr. 24301, and a third in Arsenal 3516, all of which are collections of Robert's works. Variations include the transmission of a prologue to the *Enseignement* and additional verses in the *Chastoiement* in BnF fr. 24301, which instead excludes the brief *Éloge d'une dame* (Micha, 'Les éditions', 249) and parts of the poems occur in different places in the manuscripts. Robert de Blois, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Ulrich, follows the manuscript BnF Arsenal 5201. Fox's edition, *Robert de Blois, son œuvre didactique et narrative*, follows the order of BnF fr. 24301 but includes some lines from Arsenal 5201 and elides the parts of the two poems known as the *Honneur des Dames* and the *Chanson d'Amours* (which form part of the *Enseignements* and the *Chastoiement* in BnF fr. 24301 respectively). See the review by Lecoy, 'J. H. Fox', pp. 405–08. Meyer, 'Notice du ms. de l'Arsenal 5201' edited only Arsenal 5201.

148 Paris, BnF, Arsenal 3516, Arsenal 5201; fr. 2236, and fr. 24301; see Robert de Blois, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Ulrich, pp. 487–91.

d'amour, which is attached to either one or the other in some manuscripts. The *Enseignement des princes* instructs noblemen in their public lives and describes the moral and religious duties of knights. The precepts given in the *Chastoiement des dames* assign women a domestic role and give advice on etiquette, dress, and table-manners.¹⁴⁹

As to their content, both poems in the male–female pair are conservative, as are most other didactic texts from the period, but they display some creative touches in the way they teach. The *Enseignement* clads the precepts in an elaborate allegory of knightly equipment, including his armour, clothing, banners, weapons, his horse, and saddlery. It combines teaching about chivalric splendour with religious duty.¹⁵⁰ The advice for noblewomen likewise balances Christian virtue with courtly appearance, as it emphasizes chastity as a woman's primary virtue while giving advice on beauty and framing the female body as an object of male desire.¹⁵¹ We will see that Robert's text is representative of a tension in aristocratic society between the religious constraint and courtly excess that authors negotiate in a variety of ways.

Robert's poems find a curious counterpart in the contemporary German text composed by Ulrich von Liechtenstein, a *ministerialis* from the duchy of Styria.¹⁵² In contrast to the works of Robert de Blois, his writing maintains a critical, sometimes satirical distance from the subjects it describes. His *Frauendienst* (Service to Ladies) comes in the form of a (fictional) autobiography of a knight in search of his chosen lady's approval in tournaments. His second book,¹⁵³ the *Frauenbuch* (Book of the Ladies), is a didactic dialogue that addresses the decay of courtly joy that is supposed to be generated from the society of chivalric knights and courtly ladies, who fail, however, to live up to these expectations.¹⁵⁴ Where Robert holds up service to God, Ulrich's ideal knight strives for courtly love; where Robert presses the ladies to navigate the conflicting requirements for their public behaviour, Ulrich makes their incommensurability responsible for the tensions at the courts.

However conservative much didactic writing for the court was, however immutable the roles assigned to its members in these texts seem, the literature that aimed to teach the nobility and the court does not simply aim to constrain its audience but also to legitimize their station. It often provides the nobility with the means to further cement their elevated

149 Krueger, 'Robert de Blois'.

150 See the discussion of this strategy in Wittig, 'Zur Konstruktion des Ritters'.

151 Udry, 'Robert de Blois and Geoffroy de la Tour Landry'.

152 Dopsch, 'Zwischen Dichtung und Politik'.

153 Ulrich von Liechtenstein, *Frauendienst*, ed. by Spechtler; translated into English in a condensed form as *Ulrich von Lichtenstein's 'Service to Ladies'*, trans. by Thomas.

154 Ulrich von Liechtenstein, *Das Frauenbuch*, ed. by Young.

status, while it also requires them to act the part and limits the domains of their power. It teaches the courtier to fit into the established hierarchies, but it also offers them ways to use them for their own purposes. While this literature is at its most restrictive when it addresses female conduct, it also frequently argues against too much oppression and encourages harmony between the sexes. Didactic writing for the court offers us a varied, nuanced view of courtly society, the values on which it was based, and the complex norms that regulated its community.

Didactic Communities

The courtly community at which didactic writing was aimed did not only consist of princes, knights, and ladies, but also included different ranks of the clergy. Both lay and clerical elites participated in the culture of morality at the courts in various ways and made superior ethics part of their identities and claims to a special position in society. The teaching and learning of morals was a communal enterprise and served a variety of purposes for the elites.

Clergy and Laity

The influence of the mendicant orders on the morality of European royalty is evident in the works of the Dominicans Vincent of Beauvais and Godfrey of Viterbo and the translator Jofroid de Waterford, the Augustinian Giles of Rome, and the Franciscan Roger Bacon. In their esteem for learning and their determination to teach the laity, the mendicants were well-suited to provide guidance for life in the world even to the most powerful in the secular world. The wide circulation of Giles' works was largely due to their promulgation by the orders, especially in the Empire.¹⁵⁵ The French royal family was also closely associated with the mendicant orders. After Louis's IX death, Pope Gregory X tasked his confessor, the Dominican Geoffrey de Beaulieu, with collecting the evidence that would lead to his canonization. Louis himself had advised his daughter Ysabel to consult with her confessor on a regular basis and Louis's younger sister, Isabelle of France, who joined the *sorores minores* in 1255, is honoured as a saint in the Franciscan order.¹⁵⁶ The influence of the new orders was not limited to the high nobility nor was it unconnected to other developments in the medieval Church. The canons of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) stipulated that laymen were to be taught the basics of salvation

¹⁵⁵ Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De Regimine Principum*, p. 47.

¹⁵⁶ Dalarun, Field, Lebigue, and Leurquin-Labie, *Isabelle de France*.

and Christian dogma in their own languages and codified the education of the clergy that was necessary to provide this education. In England especially, where clerical pastoral work and lay instruction had declined rapidly after 1208, these canons were actively promoted in the various bishoprics by a series of constitutions, many of which directly addressed the knowledge laity should possess.¹⁵⁷ Works like the *Elucidarium* aimed to aid the priests in their task of instructing laypeople in this essential knowledge by providing it in a concise and understandable form.¹⁵⁸ The translation of the work by Pierre d'Abernun, *Lumere as Lais*, makes the material available predominantly to lay readers, but confirms that *Clers e lais estre esluminez* (clerics and lay people could be enlightened by it, l. 684).¹⁵⁹ Claire Waters has shown that French works of *doctrina* provided a middle ground in which lay and clerical readers participated in the same kind of learning.¹⁶⁰ The translations of the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* demonstrate that lay audiences participated in learned discourses. Some readers preferred to have them adapted specifically to their own situation by moralization, as in the work of Alard de Cambrai, by selection of the most applicable parts of a work, as in the translations of the *Secretum secretorum* and *De regimine principum*, or by rendering abstract treatises into a set of precepts, as in the *Tugendspiegel*. The enormous success of some of the most faithful translations, however, show a significant amount of overlap in the reading interests of clergy and laity.

As we can see, supply and demand in regard to teaching and learning went both ways. If demand from the laity influenced the translation practice of the clergy, clerics in turn took the opportunity to influence their practice of government. Pierre d'Abernun, in his translation of *Secretum secretorum*, provides (pseudo-)Aristotelian knowledge of government to a French-speaking audience, but at the same time emphasizes that this knowledge must remain insufficient without knowledge of Christian salvation, thus promoting his earlier work on Christian dogma.¹⁶¹ Knowledge

157 Robert de Grosseteste, *Constitutions*, ed. by Luard, p. 56.

158 Gottschall, 'Das *Elucidarium*', pp. 8–47 discusses especially its reception in Germany; Ruhe, *Elucidarium und Lucidaires* analyses the reception of the work in England and France.

159 "Lumere as Lais" l'ai numé | Pur ceo k'en puent estre esluminé [...] Esluminé put estre de amur | Ki en quer le prent nostre Seignur; | Pur ceo en puent, en veritez, | Clers e lais estre luminez' (I have called it 'Light for the Laity' because they can be enlightened by it [...] those who may be enlightened by love who take it to heart as regards our Lord; thus, indeed, may both clerks and laypeople be enlightened; trans. by Waters). Pierre d'Abernun, *Lumere as Lais*, ed. by Hesketh, ll. 671–78; cf. Waters, 'Loving Teaching', p. 308.

160 Waters, *Translating Clergie*, pp. 24–27.

161 'De ceste matire treité i ad | E must des choses, satiez sanz fable, | K'al alme d'umme sunt profitable. | Le livre en verité saciez | La "Lumere as Lais" si est nomez'. (On this matter treated here there are many more things to say, know this to be true, which are useful to the soul of man. The book that knows this truth is called 'Light of the Laity'; Pierre d'Abernun, *Le Secrè de Secrez*, ed. by Beckerlegge, ll. 2363–67).

that would formerly have been preserved in an exclusively clerical domain is made available for the lay elites to use in the legitimation of their status. At the same time and in the same texts, the clergy negotiates its own role in the community of Christians, always on equal footing with or superior to the laity.¹⁶² This is true for mirrors of princes, which discuss the leadership of Christianity, but also for the translations of Latin learning in which translators limit the validity of the knowledge that can be gained by reading them. Complex mirrors of princes in Latin were probably not meant for the princes to read themselves, since their clerical tutors and advisors could convey to them the contents, though the rush by princes and nobles to acquire translations for themselves proves their desire to consult them personally.

Clerics are also at least a secondary audience to distinctly secular conduct literature. Thomasin of Zirklare addresses clerical readers a few times in his *Welscher Gast*, and even the *Doctrinal Sauvage*, with its avid defence of noble lifestyles, is addressed in some manuscripts to a noble audience consisting of knights and clerics alike:

Si il estoit uns frauncs houme ki me vousit entendre | Cheualers clerks
et lais ben i purreit aprendre | honour sens et mesure et tele costume
enprendre | par quei houn se purreit ben garder de mesprendre.

(If there is a free man who would like to listen to me, a knight, cleric, or layman could well learn honour, take up understanding and apt behaviour and such habits by which a man could well prevent himself from wrongdoing.)¹⁶³

Étienne de Fougère's *Livre des manières* addresses an audience of high nobility and clergy, from a king to a lowly knight, from the pope to the parish priest. We know that the first courts to establish what we call today *courtly conduct* were episcopal, and that the teaching of both virtue and etiquette for youths at the court and in the monasteries was very similar, so the overlap in audiences should not surprise.¹⁶⁴ The dividing line between clergy and laity, when it came to their appreciation of morality and good conduct and the books that taught them, was by no means sharply drawn.

¹⁶² Waters, *Translating Clergie*, p. 59.

¹⁶³ The additional initial verses are in Oxford, Jesus College, 29; London, British Library, Harley 978; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 86. The Jesus 29 manuscript reads slightly differently: instead of *fraunc* the poem addresses *ryche heom* (rich/powerful men). *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, p. 52.

¹⁶⁴ Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*.

Morality and Legitimation

While clerics were a secondary audience for many secular moral-didactic texts, these works played a greater role for the lay nobility. As shown above, moral training was integral part of their education and relevant in a range of contexts. The twelfth-century nobility largely defined itself by (supposedly) superior morals and the conduct to match; this was true all across north-western Europe and beyond.¹⁶⁵ In the search for the reasons for this ‘hypermorality’,¹⁶⁶ we may look into the transmission of the texts that helped foster it. If we look into the textual transmission of the translations of Latin texts, we can identify patterns that tell us much about the purpose of these texts.

Of the fifty-eight manuscripts that transmit the *Moralités des philosophes*, twenty-two date to the thirteenth century or around 1300.¹⁶⁷ There is a surprising number of texts that are regularly transmitted in the same codices, not counting miscellanies: the *Moralités* appears seven times with the *Lucidaire*,¹⁶⁸ four times with *L’image du monde*,¹⁶⁹ three times with the *Doctrinal Sauvage*, and twice each with the *Discipline de Clergie* (the French version of *Disciplina clericalis*), *Secrez de Secrez*,¹⁷⁰ *Livre dou Trésor*, the French *Disticha Catonis*, and the encyclopaedic *Livre de Sidrac*. This demonstrates that knowledge of morality was assigned a similar importance as fundamental Christian teaching and the more encyclopaedic texts. The books that transmit the *Moralitez* in the thirteenth century are overwhelmingly codices of didactic writing, ranging from predominantly religious teaching and devotional texts¹⁷¹ to more secular compositions

165 Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*.

166 Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, p. 167.

167 For the list of witnesses, see Battagliola, ‘Tradizione e traduzioni’, pp. 95–97. The thirteenth-century witnesses are Augsburg, UB, I 4. 2°, 1; Brussels, Royal Library, 11220–11221 and 9400; Cambridge, Corpus Christi, MS 405; Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, 684; Chartres, Bibliothèque municipale, 620; Paris, BnF, Arsenal 5201, BnF fr. 375, 1036, 1109, 1157, 1822, 12581, 24429, 25407, and 25247; Paris, BnF, naf 4509–10, 6883 and 13521; Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Library, LJS 55; Reims, Bibliothèque municipale, 1275; and Zagreb, Nacionalna i sveučilišna knjižnica, MR 92. I could not verify the dating for Nantes, Bibliothèque municipale, 212 and Hatfield, Cecil Papers, 299. Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Genevieve, 792 is a miscellany that contains manuscripts dating from the thirteenth to fifteenth century; I have yet to identify the date of the *Moralitez des philosophe* in this witness.

168 BnF, fr. 1036; fr. 1157; fr. 1822, fr. 12581, suppl. fr. 198; naf. 13521; Reims, Bibliothèque municipale, 1275; and Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Library, LJS 55.

169 BnF, fr. 1822, fr. 12581, suppl. fr. 198, fr. 25407, and naf. 6883.

170 BnF, fr. 1822 and 25407.

171 Such as Bruxelles, Royal Library, 9400, which transmits sermons, prayers, confessions, and short texts on the sacraments, vices and virtues, or BnF, naf. 4509–10, a book of psalms, prayers, female saint lives and a French translation of the Creed, which was probably a noblewoman’s book.

that combine morality with knowledge of the world.¹⁷² No matter where it falls on this spectrum, each codex includes at least some religious work, frequently one of the many French texts on the Apocalypse, such as Huon de Mery's *Tournoiment Antéchrist* or a French rendering of the Apocalypse according to John. In some cases, the line between a devotional book for lay readers and a clerical volume is significantly blurred.¹⁷³

Among those texts that convey more secular education, or even combine didactic with entertaining texts, there is a tendency to pair it with historiography and other texts that draw clearly on a Greek or Latin classical past. BnF français 375 transmits the *Roman de Thèbe*, Benoît de Saint-Maure's *De Troies et de Tebes*, four different texts on Alexander the Great, Wace's *Roman de Rou* (a history of the dukes of Normandy), and Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec et Enide* and *Cligès*. The latter two romances draw strongly on the glorification of the classical past: *Cligès* explicitly traces the arrival of *chevalerie* from Troy to contemporary France.¹⁷⁴

Clearly, the connection flows from a general admiration of classical knowledge. The *Moralités* is not the only French text that transmits classical morality: several manuscripts transmit it together with the French *Disticha Catonis* and the *Proverbes de Salomon*. However, the classical past plays a much larger role that is deeply intertwined with the teaching of morality. In France but also in the Empire, the origin myths of many noble families anchor them in a (mythical) past by making them descendants of Trojan heroes, frequently taking Charlemagne as the link.¹⁷⁵ Gabrielle Spiegel has shown how, in the thirteenth century, many of the works that celebrate a glorious (classical) past, especially in Flanders, were commissioned as part of attempts by the local nobility to enforce their claims of autonomous rulership against the centralizing forces of the French crown.¹⁷⁶ And indeed, a number of codices that transmit such texts together with moral teachings are from the Artois, among them BnF français 375, but many others are not. Several codices include genealogies of the French kings that link them to Trojan aristocracy.¹⁷⁷ This is because, above

172 For example, BnF, fr. 25407, which transmits the *Image du Monde* of Gossuin de Metz together with Pierre d'Abernun's translation of the *Secretum secretorum*, a French Pseudo-Cato; or Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Library, LJS 55, which includes Gossuin's encyclopedia together with the *Lucidaire* and a translation with Aldobrandino da Siena's *Régime du corps*.

173 BnF, fr. 24429 begins with a table of annals, a short text on the *états du monde*, a lapidary, the *Moralitez* followed by a confessor's manual, texts about the giving of alms, Sermons of Pope Gregory, the Rule of Saint Benedict, and several texts about Christian vices and virtues, all in French.

174 Kelly, 'Honor, Debate, and "Translatio imperii".'

175 Wolf, *Troja – Metamorphosen eines Mythos*, pp. 162–87.

176 Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*.

177 Bern, Bürgerbibliothek, 113 and BnF, naf. 13521, as well as several manuscripts of Alard de Cambrai's verse version: BnF, fr. 17177 and fr. 24431.

the claims of individual families, the origin myth of the nobility as a group was linked to both the classical past and their claim to superior morals.¹⁷⁸ The medieval nobility used knowledge of both history and morality to emphasize their place in the social order, both with a synchronic and a diachronic dimension.¹⁷⁹ The approaches of the early mirrors of princes by Gerald of Wales and Godfrey of Viterbo demonstrate the close connection between historical and moral legitimization of noble status.

The *Moralités* is a rather systematic treatise, so it is not surprising that it would be transmitted with encyclopaedias and texts of Christian doctrine. The verse rendering by Alard de Cambrai, which is more moralizing and less structured, offers a similar image: all its ten witnesses date from the thirteenth century and all combine devotional texts with secular didactic texts, frequently including works that refer to a classical past.¹⁸⁰ Poems like *Der Winsbecke* or the *Magezoge* are transmitted indiscriminately with exempla, gnomic poetry — both religious and secular — conduct literature, and amusing tales or courtly romance. Moral education, together with Christian teaching and rules of conduct, was deeply embedded in the literary culture of the Middle Ages and in life at the courts.

The role that moral education played in noble self-fashioning is visible not just in the commissioning or (as in the case of Louis IX) the writing of didactic texts. Books containing advice on moral government and noble conduct were given as presents, a practice that might have enabled other nobles to gain access to such texts, too. The codex BnF Arsenal 3142, which contains Alard de Cambrai's *Livre de philosophie* but also religious texts by the Reclus de Moliens and several moral poems by Boudoin de Condé, together with chivalric romances and the *Proverbes de Seneke le philosophe*, was commissioned by the French queen Marie de Brabant and her daughter Blanche for the count of Artois in the thirteenth century.¹⁸¹ A richly decorated codex containing a French version of the *Secretum secretorum* and Latini's *Livres dou Trésor* was given by Philippa of Hainaut to her fiancé, the future Edward III, in 1326.¹⁸² Nine years later, we find a *Secretum secretorum* alongside other didactic literature in a book list belonging to Godefroy de Naste.¹⁸³ Participating in the refinement of manners and learning had become part of what nobility meant, and it created didactic communities across the clerical and lay elites of north-western Europe and beyond.

¹⁷⁸ This link will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

¹⁷⁹ Wittig, 'Adliges Selbstverständnis'.

¹⁸⁰ Payen lists seven witnesses, ARLIMA records ten, plus one in an eighteenth-century copy: https://www.arlima.net/ad/alard_de_cambrai.html.

¹⁸¹ BnF Arsenal 3142, discussed in Azzam and Collet, 'Le manuscrit 3142 de la Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal'.

¹⁸² Harvard Law School Library 12, formerly a unit with BnF fr. 571.

¹⁸³ Van Coolput-Storms, 'Entre Flandre et Hainaut', pp. 529–47.

Conclusion

The increased emphasis on moral education among the medieval nobility is reflected in the didactic writing of the time. Texts aided and structured moral instruction, serving teachers and tutors, but they also remedied a lack of resources and made knowledge available when teachers and tutors were not present. Their popularity was also driven by the cultural shift in aristocratic society and the discourses on nobility, whose implications meant the social knowledge children could pick up in their own household would no longer suffice for the changing social and courtly environment.

By the mid-twelfth century, didactic writing for lay people was emerging all across north-western Europe, but there was a noticeable discrepancy concerning the groups it addressed. Instruction for kings in good government tended to centre strongly on the Angevin court in England and the Capetian court in France. In addition, the latter was vastly more concerned with the education of aristocratic children. Moral writing addressing the Hohenstaufen kings continued to promote general virtues and the place of the dynasty in the order of the world, in history, and in the social hierarchy. The French monarchy drew much more legitimacy from their reputation for being learned rulers and God's representatives on earth, and as such they would serve as the guarantors of the common good. Texts which served not only to educate the nobility in moral conduct but also to legitimize their role did not reach the Empire in the same degree. Whereas in France, learned texts and treatises on the aristocracy circulated in French and Latin sources were often quickly translated into the vernacular, there was little produced in the German vernacular on this level, and what there was addressed different groups. The German didactic literature rarely even addressed the middle ranks of the nobility but almost exclusively targeted the lower echelons: there is not a single didactic text in German that is confirmed to have been owned by a princely family. German literature was read at the princely courts — the court of the Landgrave of Thuringia is a famous example — and princely families (e.g. the Welf dynasty) did commission literary works, but they did not serve to justify the place of the high nobility in the order of medieval society in the same way as they did in France. German kingship and the government of the princely estates functioned via a less advanced administrative system than England, France, and Flanders, which probably had repercussions for the importance of learning — a treatise detailing the scholastic curriculum for the education of royal sons, produced twice for the French royal family in the twelfth century, would perhaps have been less appreciated in the Empire. In northern Italy, however, where self-governing cities became stronger and more confident in the face of their imperial overlords, the literature of government blossomed just as much as it did in France and the exchange between the two Romance-language areas was strong.

In both England and Germany, vernacular literature was aimed at social climbers, those who were rather remote from the courts but who wished to learn about its structures to gain a reputation, benefits, or patronage. Texts produced in France, even those aimed at the knightly class, had a strong legitimizing character — thus knights were legitimized in their function as the moral and physical defenders of Christendom, the aristocracy as the leaders of the community. Writing on good government was commissioned by kings but it was read also by princes who had to compete against an increasingly dominant royalty. The splendours of courtly culture and noble lifestyles were acknowledged as legitimate noble privileges, even in learned treatises such as Giles of Rome's *De regimine*.

Whereas the discourses that tied nobility to virtue and virtue to conduct were present in the courts of England, France, the Netherlands, and the Empire, the moral-didactic texts that promoted and validated these discourses reflect differences in lay literacy, social stratification, the degree of administrative government, and the position of the nobility in a society.

Negotiating the myriad protrusions of socio-political reality into the idealized and supposedly universal notions of moral behaviour demanded nuanced and ingenious strategies from the writers of this literature, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Models of Authority

Medieval literature was shaped by a productive interplay of oral and literary culture, and this is especially true of didactic writing.¹ Teaching and learning took place almost exclusively through spoken conversation. Much of the teaching in the schools involved reading out loud, question-and-answer sequences, or reciting authorities by heart. More formalized, but still very much anchored in orality, was the university curriculum, which was shaped by *lectiones* (lectures), *quaestiones* (interrogations), and *disputationes* (disputations).² Learning outside the institutions was an even more markedly oral and aural affair. Moral education thus overwhelmingly took place in face-to-face communication between people who had some degree of personal or professional relationship. As this discourse emerged as a written form, writers needed to bridge the gap between composition and reception and to establish a connection between authors and audiences. Moral-didactic writing thus captures only a tiny fraction of the extensive and varied instruction in norms and good conduct. In order to make the transition into a different medium, from phonic to written text, teaching was not just ‘scripted’ — written down — but also ‘textualized’: its conceptual make-up changed.³ These textualized discourses made

1 The interplay of orality and literacy in the Middle Ages has been subject to extensive academic study since the 1970s, much of which is based on the works of Milman Parry and his student Albert Lord. See Parry, ‘Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making’; Lord, *The Singer of Tales*. Walter J. Ong explores the significance of their observations on oral literature for the medieval period in ‘Orality, Literacy, and Medieval Textualization’. On the aural reception of medieval (German) literature, see Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading*. A collection of essays that explore Green’s approaches in other medieval literatures was edited by Chinca and Young, *Orality and Literacy in the Middle Ages*. Zumthor, *La lettre et la voix* has argued that medieval society was an ‘aural’ one, in which most things were received by hearing. For an overview of existing research until 2000 see Briggs, ‘Literacy, Reading and Writing in the Medieval West’.

2 Novikoff, *The Medieval Culture of Disputation*, esp. Chapter 3: Scholastic Practices of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance.

3 The distinction between medial and conceptual changes in the process of writing down oral discourses originates in Koch and Oesterreicher, ‘Schriftlichkeit und kommunikative Distanz’: the authors use the terms *Verschriftung* and *Verschriftlichung*. The English translation ‘scripting’ and ‘textualization’ was suggested by Christine Ehler and Ursula Schaefer, ‘Aspekte des Medienwechsels in verschiedenen Kulturen und Epochen. Eine Einleitung’, p. 4.

use of a range of literary models that authors employed to convey their instruction across the gap that resulted from the change in medium — the temporal and spatial gap between themselves and their audiences that does not exist in spoken conversation.

This chapter will explore the linguistic and literary strategies authors used to achieve this connection. We will see that the choice of literary forms determined the relationship between tutor and disciple in the texts. By analysing the use of literary models, we gain insights into the social roles individuals could take in the didactic process and the hierarchies connected to them.

Teaching and Authority

Stephen Jaeger has shown how schools and universities were long dominated by charismatic teacher-personas who managed to bind their students to them and establish strong, emotional relationships that fostered learning.⁴ The teaching of religious knowledge, *doctrina*, was inherently concerned with the relationship between master and disciple, a relationship for which Christianity provided several models. Claire Waters argues that the reversal of conventional status roles was a central feature in the teaching and learning of *doctrina*, a feature that demonstrates the existence of Christian truths outside of secular hierarchies.⁵ In the teaching of religious knowledge, virtue and inspiration featured much more prominently than rank or even formal education. On this basis, teachers could learn from disciples, kings could be advised on their immortal souls by lowly men.

As moral education covered a space between religious and secular knowledge, questions of status and authority came to play a central role, both for the clergy and for the lay aristocracy. The literary models on which authors could draw did not only include biblical teacher–student relationships but were also heavily indebted to Roman cultures of education, in which hierarchy and teaching were closely connected. In this chapter, I will characterize the corpus of moral-didactic writing in relation to its use of different textual models to address questions of status, affirm authority, and create community. I argue that in these ways authors assigned meaning to the knowledge they aimed to convey, encouraged its reception and contributed to the fashioning of clergy and nobility as participants in an enterprise of moral improvement. Depending on the subject of their teaching and the intended audience, they chose different textual forms that implied different relationships between authors and audiences. The

⁴ Jaeger, *The Envy of the Angels*, pp. 239–43.

⁵ Waters, *Translating Clergie*, Chapter 1.

use of these models allows us a glimpse into the social dynamics of moral education.

Teachers and disciples were usually connected by personal bonds that could be hierarchical to a greater or lesser degree. If a courtier corrected another courtier's behaviour, the obligation to follow the advice was not as strong as if a father taught his son about correct manners or a cleric advised a ruler on just government. The authority depended on the relative status of teacher and disciple but also the kind of knowledge, the way it was acquired — learned knowledge weighed heavier than personal experience. Some social relationships had long been fashioned as educational ones and thus carried a certain authority in themselves, and medieval authors drew on this in their teachings. Roman literary culture had transmitted a range of texts written by fathers to their sons in which the former emphasized their duty to instruct their children in the ways of the world and, conversely, the duty of their children to obey their parents and accept their teaching.⁶ While treatises of that kind were often written by men of considerable learning (or at least, those composed by learned men tended to survive into the Middle Ages), there was always an element of knowledge acquired by experience that characterized this teaching constellation. From the Old Testament, we already have models of kings who were advised by learned men whose knowledge came directly from God, enabling them to scold even the mightiest king if they failed to live up to the duties of their office.⁷ The teacher–student pair Aristotle and Alexander the Great greatly influenced aristocratic culture in the high Middle Ages, judging from the success of the *Secretum secretorum* as well as the various versions of the Latin and vernacular Alexander romances. Since the early medieval period, kings had received advice from their bishops and the relationships thereby created became an integral part of their identities.⁸ The difference between parental teaching and the instruction of an advisor existed not only in the type of knowledge — learned or experiential — but also in the motives of the teachers. Parental advice tends to emphasize the great love for the child that inspired the teaching and prioritizes the best interests of the tutee.⁹ Clerical teaching come from a place of love that is less for the specific ruler they are advising but more for mankind as a whole, but here, too, there is a strong element of duty inherent in the social role, just as there is for the fathers. In all cases, there is, however, a communal element: fathers introduce their sons into the aristocratic societies of which they themselves are part, just as the clerical advice, even if it concerns government, aims to integrate the ruler into the community of good Christians. Teaching the

6 Lemoine, 'Parental Gifts', pp. 337–66.

7 Waters, *Translating Clergie*, p. 67.

8 Weiler, 'Clerical Admonitio', pp. 557–75.

9 Feros Ruys, 'From Virtue Ethics to Emotional Intelligence', p. 24.

individual is always part of creating a better community — a community of which the authors themselves are part.

Doctrina and *clergie* (learned knowledge), however, carry a heavier authority than knowledge acquired by experience and this authority influences the relationship between teacher and student. The literary models reflect this authority and the hierarchies that are established by teaching. Depending on the kind of knowledge being conveyed, authors employ more or less formal language or a more or less authoritative voice. They evoke conversational situations that may be symmetrical or asymmetrical and allow for dispute, or that may not. They can employ a systematic structure or, by contrast, present a loose collection of rules of, according to the status and learning of their audiences. Finally, in a multilingual society, the choice of language also mirrors the status of the knowledge and establishes authority or community and places the teacher inside or outside the group of learners.

The spectrum from which writers can choose ranges from thoroughly structured treatises to straightforward collections of gnomic wisdom, from authoritative writing to a rather discursive treatment of the educational contents. The latter option, in the form of dialogues, can be anything from highly asymmetrical conversations to symmetrical discussions in which each of the interlocutors contributes to the advancement of the train of thought. Some forms create a community among the audience, with the author placed inside or outside this community.

In the following, I will analyse the literary models of didactic writing and explain how they establish different relationships between author or teacher-persona and the audience or student-persona. Beginning with inherently 'literary' forms, such as treatises and letter books, we will move on to forms that employ 'feigned orality' in order to establish a more personal connection.¹⁰

Letters — Letter Books — Treatises

Treatises, letters, and books often explicitly refer to themselves as such, and are thus self-referentially literary.¹¹ The most obvious attempt to bridge the gap between two interlocutors is perhaps to write a letter, with each letter representing half of a conversation, which can then be extended into a textualized dialogue. The idea of a letter is therefore closely

¹⁰ Gaunt, 'Fictions of Orality', p. 120.

¹¹ e.g. Cicero, *De officiis*, I. 2: Sed cum statuissem scribere ad te aliquid hoc tempore; *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, II. 125–26, 140: Húsvrouwe, nu wis des gemant, | swenn dir min buoch kumt ze hant [...] míns buoches ich alsô beginne. (Hostess, be cautioned, if you get to hold my book in your hand [...] so I begin my book).

linked to orality and face-to-face communication. In fact, the earliest letters transmitted in Greek were notes to a messenger, reminding him what to say to the addressee.¹² The physical and spatial distance between the interlocutors has been described as the 'epistolary situation'.¹³ From the twelfth century onwards, letter writing became increasingly standardized, as it was a major tool of administration and, like other forms of administrative writing, tended towards the formulaic.¹⁴ The *artes dictandi* that evolved for these purposes drew heavily on the rhetorical arts that originally governed oratory.¹⁵ The medieval letter — the *sermo absentia quasi inter presentes*, as Ambrose described the epistolary genre — thus combined fictive communicative immediacy with formulaic language and the possibilities of conceptional literacy. The interplay of these two influences made letters a highly variable form of writing that could accommodate a broad range of topics and modes of writing. Early on, letters were used for works of instruction and persuasion, and even though *brevitas* was traditionally valued in letters, many famous authors wrote extensive expositions — no longer necessarily to a single addressee, but for a wider audience — which meant the lines between *epistula*, *libellus*, and *tractatus* could become blurred.

Medieval authors saw the borders between these types of texts as fluid. Peter the Venerable referred to letters interchangeably as *libelli* and *tractatus*¹⁶ and Bernard of Clairvaux commented on his own lack of brevity in *De praecepto et dispensatione*, remarking that the reader may consider it a letter or a book.¹⁷ The Latin *tractatus* emerges in the medieval period: the use of the noun *tractatus* or of the verb *tractare* indicates a learned and comprehensive exposition of different aspects of a unitary subject, often exploring its underlying principles.¹⁸ Hugh of Saint Victor's *Didascalicon* defines the term thus: 'Tractatus est unius rei multiplex expositio'.¹⁹ Though vernacular translations of this word exist, the moral-didactic texts from the twelfth and thirteenth century do not use them. French writers use *livre* or simply *enseignement* (referring to the content rather than the form), whereas texts in German are referred to as *buoch* or *rede*.

12 Constable, *Letters and Letter Collections*, p. 13.

13 Koskenniemi, *Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes*, p. 53; Doty, 'The Classification of Epistolary Literature', p. 193.

14 Camargo, *Ars dictaminis. Ars dictandi*, p. 26.

15 Camargo, *Ars dictaminis. Ars dictandi*, p. 29.

16 *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, ed. by Constable, II, p. 3, no. 8.

17 Bernard of Clairvaux, *De praecepto et dispensatione*, xx (61), ed. by Leclercq and Rochais; cf. Constable, *Letters and Letter Collections*, pp. 19 and 25.

18 Campopiano, *Writing the Holy Land*, p. 186.

19 'A treatise is an explanation of one subject composed of several parts'; Hugonis de Sancto Victore, *Didascalicon de studio legendi*, ed. by Buttner, IV, p. 16.

The *OED* definition of *tractatus* specifies that this type of writing is 'formal' and/or 'methodological'.²⁰ This indicates that, from a modern perspective, we expect that a treatise will use predominantly language of distance. 'Methodological' implies a deliberate structure, an attempt to be comprehensive, and an exploration of principles that are treated with the same degree of detail. We also expect the author to consider the subject from an objective viewpoint. Formal language, in the medieval period, is associated either with high register (and thus, by implication, with the use of the Latin language) or the use of formulas. The combined effects of the rules of classical rhetoric, their application to the medieval *artes dictaminis*, and the use of authoritative models mean that high medieval letters in Latin are often very formulaic, to the point of being formally indistinguishable from official documents.²¹ However, Latin letters with didactic intent could be very personal and affectionate, too, even as they were rhetorically crafted.²²

Writers of vernacular letters and treatises took liberties in their use of the models they adapted from Latin cultures of writing. Often, we can detect different models and traditions coalescing in a given text. Letters and treatises become even more similar when letters treat a subject in a rather systematic way, perhaps assuming a wider audience, or when treatises are dedicated to a person the author knows intimately and are therefore presented as an elaborate letter. The convention of dedicating a treatise to a specific reader was already widespread in classical literature. Often, a father would dedicate a work to a son, in texts closely related to father–son dialogues.²³ We find both these forms in medieval moral-didactic texts in the vernacular languages.

Fannie J. Lemoine relates this practice to the specific situation of Roman elite society: the Roman patriarchal family model granted a father great power over but also responsibility for his sons.²⁴ In dedicating a didactic work to his sons, a father would make a public gesture that demonstrated his affection for them and proved he cared about their education, and also introduced them to the learned circles of Roman elite

20 *OED*: 'A book or writing which treats of some particular subject; commonly (in mod. use always), one containing a formal or methodological discussion or exposition of the principles of the subject'. *Oxford English Dictionary: Corrected Re-Issue*, ed. by Murray, xi, 309.

21 Constable, *Letters and Letter Collections*, p. 23.

22 For example, in pastoral letters such as those of Anselm and Hildebert, and monastic letters such as Abaelard's to Heloise and the Letters of Peter of Blois. See Verbaal, 'Epistolary Voices and the Fiction of History', pp. 9–32 and the other contributions in the volume *Medieval Letters between Fiction and Document*, ed. by Hoegel and Bartoli.

23 Lemoine, 'Parental Gifts', p. 348.

24 Lemoine, 'Parental Gifts', pp. 337–66, referring to the earlier work of Hirzel, *Der Dialog*, p. 429.

society. A similar effect was achieved in open didactic letters from fathers to sons.²⁵

The close connection between letters and treatises is already evident in classical didactic writing. Such texts, which could offer instruction on a range of topics, from grammar and rhetoric to medicine or ethics, were often dedicated to the author's son. Didactic writing from fathers to sons ranged from humble moral-didactic letters to father-son dialogues²⁶ to copious handbooks, which were introduced by letters to the dedicatee — the son — and gave indications about the receiver's learning, situation, and the relation between father and son. The dedication served the author as a way to develop their topic *ex personis*, as rhetorical theory would have it. This classical heritage also implied that letters and treatises were closely connected literary forms in which teaching could be transmitted. Both personal and public, the difference between one and the other was often a matter of degree rather than absolute. Among the moral-didactic texts of the high medieval period, we find examples across the spectrum: letters that are rather public in character as well as others that are presented as being private, even secret. Some texts that we know as treatises employ language implying proximity, resulting in a conversational tone. In the remainder of the chapter, we will look at a few parameters of the continuum between immediacy and distance to explore how authors bridged the gap between themselves and their audiences and used their writing to reflect on or establish relations and status in the pursuit of their didactic enterprise.

Complexity and Simplicity of Textual Structures

Written composition allows authors to reflect on the presentation of their material to a much greater degree than any spoken conversation would allow. From the twelfth century onwards, we see didactic texts that develop their topics within a clear structure, sometimes hierarchically structured on several levels. This occurs predominantly in learned texts, most often in Latin, but from the thirteenth century onwards vernacular texts, too, employ clear structures that demonstrate a great deal of reflection on the presentation of the material. (We will discuss in Chapter 5 to what

25 Lemoine, 'Parental Gifts,' p. 342, e.g. the letter of Sidonius Apuleius, Epistle 3. 13, which offers moral advice in open epistolary form. The practice of didactic letter-treatises to children did not, however, cease after classical antiquity, as the example of Dhouda's *Liber manualis* shows, a ninth-century religious and moral instruction of a Frankish Duchess to her son, cf. *Dhuoda: Handbook for her Warrior Son*, ed. and trans. by Thiebaux.

26 Hirzel, *Der Dialog*, pp. ix–x, lists father-son dialogues as particularly frequent in Roman literature, found in, for example, in Cato, pseudo-Cato, Cicero, Livy, Seneca, Asconius, Quintilian, Martianus Capella, Macrobius, and Donatus.

degree authors structure the information in their texts.) Alongside the increasingly elaborate structure, we frequently find authors developing topics in an associative manner, each point arising out of the previous one, in a steady stream of ideas. In the scholarship on these texts, this approach has often been mischaracterized as *lack of structure*.²⁷ Though the text ostensibly develops one topic, it will get waylaid by an interesting aspect of the discussion, skip other aspects entirely, and return to a previously covered topic if it connects to another thought developed later. Redundancies, circular reasoning, omission — these are features typically found in spoken conversation. In some cases, this incoherent treatment of the overall topic has to do with the nature of composition and the circumstances of copying. If an author combines teachings from several sources, especially if he does not have time and means to weave the individual sources into a coherent whole, this will inevitably lead to gaps in the argument and repetition of other points. The fact that vernacular didactic texts were, compared to other medieval texts, reworked and altered even more substantially in the process of copying often results in an even more ‘patchworked’ structure.²⁸ However, besides the accidental or inadvertent reasons for the text’s lack of coherence, an associative structure could also be used purposefully by the author.

A striking example of a text that has been called unstructured, but which actually employs associative development in its argument is the *Tugendspiegel*. From this example we can see beyond doubt that the author chose this mode of thematic development deliberately. The Latin source for the German text, the *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, itself based on a Roman model by Cicero (*De officiis*), is meticulously structured.²⁹ The text opposes two duties, the honourable and the useful, and deals with each of them in turn by discussing the constitutive virtues (and sub-virtues) of each, finally resolving the opposition with the conclusion that the honourable is always also useful, and vice versa. By contrast, the *Tugendspiegel* dissolves the structure entirely.³⁰ It gives up on the opposition between *honestum* and *utilis* and instead connects the two terms in a formula: in the initial lines of the didactic poem, the author, Wernher von Elmendorf, promises his audience *vrume* (*utilis*) and *ere* (*honestum*) if they

27 For example, this judgement was made for the *Tugendspiegel* by Ehrismann, ‘Die Grundlagen des ritterlichen Tugendsystems’, p. 9. Similarly, Rocher, ‘Wernher von Elmendorf, un “adapteur courtois” didactique’, who calls the structure ‘sans pensée directrice’ (p. 58).

28 The great degree of variance and mouvance of medieval texts has been frequently discussed among literary historians, cf. eg. the contributions to the volume *Le texte médiéval: de la variante à la recréation*, ed. by Le Cornec-Rochelois, Rochebouet, and Salamon. Didactic writing in the vernacular tended to undergo even more substantial alterations as the texts were adapted to specific situations of reception.

29 Delhay, ‘Une adaptation du “De officiis” au XII^e siècle’, pp. 227–58.

30 Bumke, ‘Die Auflösung des Tugendsystems’, pp. 39–54.

act according to his advice.³¹ The opposition between *honestum* and *utilis* is dissolved right from the start and for the remainder of the text the two terms are used as a structuring formula. Often the themes are connected by a situation in which they might occur or by a key word that is related to both, and Wernher typically develops a new topic out of the previous one in an *associative* way.

Whenever this is not the case and Wernher shifts from his current topic to an unrelated one, he uses the structuring formula *vrume/ere*. In the first 550 verses, the double formula containing the collocations *frum und ere* occurs four times; on another four occasions, only the benefit for the honourable is emphasized.³² Later in the poem, the formulae become more varied.³³ Bumke, in his edition of the poem, begins a new paragraph every time one of these formulas occurs. There are, however, further expressions that likewise help to structure the text by denoting the treatment of a new aspect of the topic, the introduction of an *exemplum*, or the use of a quotation. In most cases they begin with *noch* (furthermore), but do not take up two full lines, as the formulas do: this is the case with 'noch saltu ratis lebin' (l. 471), 'noch saltu daz merkin' (l. 519), 'noch salich dich ein tugent lerin' (l. 647), 'noch wil ich dir kundin' (l. 695), 'noch merke was man dich lere' (l. 855). When quotations are introduced, often the word *abir* is used, translating the Latin *aut* from the *Moralium* (ll. 103, 635, 656, 724, and 906).

Despite the author's attempts to introduce some structuring elements into the text, for the most part the development of ideas happens by association, often as a situation in which a certain detail becomes useful or in which a shared key word connects one idea with another. The connection is not a scholarly one but rather a practical one, based on what the person would have to consider in the given situation. The structural hierarchy exists on only two levels. Wernher's method of organizing his elements is much more conversational. It might have had greater appeal for an audience that was less used to the complex structures of written treatises. Perhaps it was not intended to be read by an individual at all, but rather to be read aloud to an audience. In the second case, Wernher's structure would have been much easier to follow. In this way, the *Tugendspiegel* imitates to a certain degree the orality of the in-person teaching to which a

31 Wernher von Elmendorf, *Tugendspiegel*, ed. by Bumke, l. 9: 'es sye sin frume und sin ere' (It would be useful to him and honourable).

32 *Frum und ere*: Wernher von Elmendorf, *Tugendspiegel*, ed. by Bumke, ll. 7, 85–86, 47374, 546–47; *lerin/erin*: Wernher von Elmendorf, *Tugendspiegel*, ed. by Bumke, ll. 353–54, 379–80, 369–70, 413–14. 'Noch sal ich dich lerin wes du bedarft zu dinen erin' (Furthermore I shall teach you what you need for your honour).

33 Variations occur, such as: 'noch saltu ratis lebin' (l. 471), 'noch saltu daz merkin' (l. 519), 'noch salich dich ein tugent lerin' (l. 647), 'noch wil ich dir kundin' (l. 695), 'noch merke was man dich lere' (l. 855).

twelfth-century audience was more accustomed. This is also apparent from other features that create a sense of direct conversation.

One of these features is the lack of deixis. In private reading, the impression of proximity between author and audience can be feigned by textual features.³⁴ In the absence of shared points of reference, authors can insert deictic expressions whose readers breathe life into them either in the moment of a performance or in the process of reading. There are no deictic references to place or time in the *Tugendpiegel*, with the exception of the short narrative passages. The text can be read or heard anywhere at any time; the context is established by the concrete occasion of reception. This gives the advice a sense of universality and general validity. Wernher frequently phrases his advice as a form of direct address, using the second person singular pronoun and the imperative with the auxiliary *suln*: ‘du salt’ (you shall), or as an imperative without an auxiliary (e.g. *du suches*, ‘you should look for’). This way, he does not treat the audience as a group but addresses the advice to every single listener/reader separately. In other cases, the poem addresses the audience as a group of listeners by using a second person plural pronoun. This happens in verses that do not contain clear advice but refer to the situation of reception: ‘dez mugit ir bispel horen’ (you can hear an example of this, l. 149). This creates a sense of community in the audience, which contributes to the literary performance (or alludes to this in the case of private reading). Despite these addresses to the audience, it is clear that the author does not expect to *know* his audience; these *deictica* are a fiction.

While the *Tugendpiegel*’s predecessor, the *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, is a treatise written in the language of learning that presents its contents in a highly structured, hierarchical manner, the German vernacular adaptation, by dissolving the abstract order and using language of immediacy, instead establishes a connection with its readers. This illustrates that by the twelfth century, teaching in the vernacular was still associated with the spoken word and face-to-face communication. The French translation of the Latin treatise that was made c. 100 years later did not make this change:³⁵ thirteenth-century French was a high-prestige language that could be adopted for learned content in a way twelfth-century German could not.

Degrees of Familiarity

Moral instruction could be deeply personal or highly political. The relationship between *magister* and *educandus* could be intimate, but nonethe-

³⁴ Koch and Osterreicher, ‘Language of Immediacy’, p. 445.

³⁵ *Das Moraliun Dogma Philosophorum*, ed. by Homberg, p. 83.

less had the potential to be a performance of status. Accordingly, different literary forms could be used to convey a fiction of familiarity even when a larger public was envisaged as an audience.

The letter-form lends itself to present didactic content in a personal, affectionate form. The earliest vernacular example from the corpus is *Der heimliche Bote*, probably written towards the end of the twelfth century. The text is written from the perspective of a messenger who delivers a lover's message to his beloved for the purpose of *huote* (surveillance) — that is, to help her maintain a good reputation.³⁶ The device of the messenger persona and the sender-as-lover allows for an intimate mode of communication; meanwhile, by introducing the letter through a messenger, the text implies a spoken alongside a written mode of communication. The close personal relationship between the lovers is mediated by the letter/messenger framing, and the text uses some features of language of proximity. For instance, it seems to make reference to a personal experience that is nevertheless so general that any courtly audience would relate to it.³⁷

The remainder of the text comprises generic advice for courtly ladies and knights and does not directly address the female reader who was introduced as the implied audience at the beginning. It is, after all, an open text that employs the intimate lover–messenger–beloved device to establish a relationship with its readers: the teachings are offered in the readers' best interest, from a place of love and care. This is very similar to the father–son framing of many dialogues (as we will see below) and serves the same purpose as the dedicatory letters that often precede treatises. Modern scholars have been unsure how to categorize this short piece; it has been read both as a love-letter³⁸ and as a specimen of the booklet-type.³⁹ In fact, the very question of its genre is misguided as, rather than adhering to one specific genre, the text deliberately plays with the possibilities offered by vernacular literacy, which at this point was still newly emerging.⁴⁰

At the other end of the spectrum of public and private letter writing, we find the 'letters' written by the French king Louis IX a century later.⁴¹

36 *Der heimliche Bote*, ed. by Meyer-Benfey, ll. 1–6: 'Th bin ei heinlich bote, | nv bevlich ih daz gotte, | daz er daz (laze) werden | (daz) ih fol werben, | (daz) fol ih (bit)en alle tage. | got laz (e)z (werden ane) sch(ad)e' ('I am a secret messenger. Now I give it to God that he allows it to be that I may court; I will pray for it every day. God let it happen without harm').

37 *Der heimliche Bote*, ed. by Meyer-Benfey, l. 23: 'Th han gesehen mange man' ('I have seen many men').

38 Fischer, 'Die sogenannten "Ratschläge für Liebende"', p. 421; *Miscellaneen zur Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, ed. by Docen, II, 305–07.

39 Glier, *Artes armandi*, p. 18 n. 1.

40 I have previously discussed the question of the genre of this text and to which degree it is actually relevant to its understanding. See Wittig, 'Fragments of Didacticism', pp. 177–90.

41 Delmas, *Saint Louis*.

In these letters, Louis addresses ‘son chier filz ainzné Phelippe’ and ‘sa chiere et amee file Ysabelle, roine de Navarre’ — in the letter to Isabelle, he even asks her not to show this letter to anyone except her brother without Louis’s permission.⁴² He addresses his children in the first person, calling them *chiers filz* and *chierre fille*, and refers in several places to what would appear to be personal details, such as their individual situations (Isabelle as Queen of Navarre and Philip as prospective successor to the French throne). He emphasizes that he is writing the letters by his own hand, so that his children will easily accept his advice, and passes on a short moralistic story to Philip about his great-grandfather, Philip II Augustus. It may seem as personal a letter as a father can write to his children. And yet, some twenty years after the presumed date of composition of these letters, at the time Louis IX was canonized,⁴³ a large number of copies and translations of these letters circulated (with various degrees of redaction) inside and outside the kingdom of France.⁴⁴ Versions of them were included in Louis’s biography, written by Geoffrey de Beaulieu, and copies were mass-produced in the scriptorium of the Abbey of Saint-Denis, which produced historical works that constructed the history of the Capetian dynasty within the context of world and salvation history. The publicity of Louis’s letters was clearly no accident.

The ability to write letters became not just a requirement for administration and government in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but also a marker of education. Letters could be written to be read out aloud in front of an audience (which would consist of the addressee and their social circle) but also to be kept and copied both as models and as examples of the sender’s intellectual distinction.⁴⁵ Letter writing for the sake of displaying one’s mastery has been called a mimetic fiction, and it could serve as a powerful tool for self-fashioning — just as dedicated treatises did in antiquity.⁴⁶ Examining episcopal letters of *admonitio* addressed to kings, Björn Weiler has shown that such writing did not only perform the

42 ‘Enseignement a Ysabelle: Je vous comment que nous ne voie chest escrit sans mon congiet, excepté vostre frere’ (I command you to let no one see this writing without my permission except your brother); *The Instructions of Saint Louis*, ed. by O’Connell, p. 26. Both letters, with facing English translations, were published by Ashley in *The French Enseignement a Phelippe*, p. 22.

43 The letters were part of the testimonies in the canonization process, cf. Carolus-Barré, *Le Procès de canonisation de Saint Louis* which contains a modern French translation of the *Enseignement* (pp. 61–67). More recently the excellent study by Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis*, pp. 51–60. Gaposchkin has made available the most important texts that were used in the canonization of Saint Louis: see *Blessed Louis, the Most Glorious of Kings*, ed. by Gaposchkin.

44 Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis*, p. 57. For the transmission of the letters in England, see Lachaud, ‘The Knowledge and Use of the “Teachings of Saint Louis”’.

45 Constable, *Letters and Letter-Collections*, p. 7.

46 Verbaal, ‘Epistolary Voices and the Fiction of History’, p. 19.

clerical duty of leading laity in spiritual matters, according to biblical and patristic notions; it also allowed the sender to create a persona, an ideal based on shared conceptions of clerical duty and the relation between king and bishop.⁴⁷ The sender of such letters demonstrates erudition, status, and responsibility, as he is in a position to advise royalty. The recipient of such advice complies with the requirement of good counsel. These admonishing letters acquired a moral force: they connected the sender's learning with his moral integrity. They rarely gave advice on a particular situation but discussed established royal duties and virtues so that both parties could demonstrate their conformity with them.⁴⁸ In writing these letters to his children, Louis combines the self-fashioning tradition of parent-child advice with the tradition of letters of *admonitio* to (future) rulers. He thus fashions himself as a spiritual leader and an ideal parent. That these letters supported the creation of his own persona as pious king becomes evident in their use in the later sanctification process.⁴⁹ But Louis does not only present himself in such a light: he also extends it to his offspring and his entire dynasty. In sharing the moral example of his grandfather and passing on his advice to his children, he creates a line of pious rulership that is explicitly connected to the sanctity of the royal office, as he makes clear in his reminder to his son that the French king is anointed. This is a message to his subjects as much as to his children. Louis fashions himself as a holy king. The very persona created through (among other things) this act of writing is what makes the texts so immensely popular: people want to partake in the knowledge this ideal writer passes on. That the name itself was much more important than authenticity becomes clear, in the case of Louis, by the numerous redactions of the text that were already circulating in the late twelfth century. Both letters and dedicated treatises use the conceit of personal advice to create a public persona. When Louis writes to his daughter that he penned the letter by his own hand so she would better accept the advice it contains, this extends to other readers as well — handwritten documents carry legal weight, after all, and even if a reader holds in their hands a copy of a copy of that autograph, the fiction created in these lines nevertheless persists, and lends the text greater authority.⁵⁰

As we can see, literary forms can help establish a connection between author and reader and establish or develop a relationship between them. They help both parties create a persona and refer to specific social roles and their associated status and hierarchies, which transcend those of sender and receiver. Many forms of didactic writing have a personal element, though the effect they achieve is quite different from the feel

47 Weiler, 'Clerical admonitio', pp. 557–60.

48 Weiler, 'Clerical admonitio', p. 570.

49 Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis*, p. 55.

50 *The French Enseignement a Philippe*, ed. and transl. by Ashley, p. 4.

of face-to-face conversations. Fictions of spoken conversation, on the other hand, can make the interplay of various social roles more directly visible and relate to the audiences' experience with oral instruction. Accordingly, dialogues and monologues have been used in didactic writing for centuries.⁵¹

Dialogues and Monologues

Dialogues and monologues are the most natural form of spoken conversation, and the manner in which most people in the Middle Ages would have received most of their instruction. They are also connected to a long and rich literary tradition.⁵² Monologues and dialogues have been preferred forms for didactic purposes since classical antiquity and they remain popular for the teaching of Christian doctrine. Despite implying spoken conversation, both monologues and dialogues can deploy the full range of literary strategies. They are suited to conveying the relation between the interlocutors, *praeceptor* and *educandus*. Depending on how the personas are represented and the subject matter discussed, this relation can be more or less hierarchical, allowing for more or less active participation of the disciple — or even dissent and debate. Different models exist for the interlocutors' roles, how the instruction is instigated, the symmetry of the conversation, the balance of turn-taking and share in the exchange, and the degree to which it is mandatory for the disciple to accept the advice. These different kinds of monologues and dialogues thus work with different hierarchical relations and are more or less authoritative.

Monologues

Religious knowledge can claim absolute truth; *doctrina* is non-negotiable, at least for lay audiences.⁵³ If instruction comes from a religious authority, such as a priest or a member of the clergy, this can counterbalance other status factors. Sermons are a prime example of asymmetrical and unilateral conversations, since they represent a conversation characterized by the privileged role of one speaker. The *praeceptor* is the priest who initiates the instruction, which usually takes place in one connected speech with

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- 51 See Cardelle de Hartmann, *Lateinische Dialoge 1200–1400*, pp. 58–76, for Latin dialogues in the later Middle Ages, and Kästner, *Mittelalterliche Lehrgespräche*, pp. 36–70, for German examples; for the early modern period, see Bénouis, *Le dialogue philosophique*, pp. 143–48.
- 52 See, for example, Goldhill, *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity*, for dialogues in Antiquity; Cardelle de Hartmann, *Lateinische Dialoge*, pp. 58–76, for Latin dialogues in the later Middle Ages.
- 53 Loughlin, 'The Basis and Authority of Doctrine', p. 49.

little or no room for the *educandus* to give feedback. Though typically delivered orally, *artes praedicandi* provide tools for the composition of written sermons.⁵⁴ A number of medieval moralists follow models from sermons in their didactic endeavours. Unsurprisingly, it is often clerical authors who employ this form: the range of contents they cover goes beyond *doctrina* in the strict sense, but encompass teachings for a good Christian life in the world. They adapt their teachings to their respective audiences and speak from a position of authority that characterizes their relationship to their readers for whose moral education they take responsibility.

Étienne de Fougère dedicates his *Livre des manières* to the countess Cecily of Hereford, but its range of topics indicates that it addresses the high nobility of England. The *Livre* covers the sins of the different social groups in society, from the king to the clergy (from the pope to the parish priests), the high nobility, knights, peasants and merchants and, finally, women. While it is modelled after a *sermo ad status*, Étienne does not envision an audience of lowly readers but instead lays out the model of an ideal society directed to those in charge of its order — the secular and clerical elites of England. This was a milieu with which Étienne was intimately familiar. It is unclear when exactly Étienne wrote his *Livre*, but it seems likely that it was after he left his position at the chancellorship of Henry II, when he had already taken the bishopric of Rennes.⁵⁵

Late twelfth-century theories about the composition and rhetoric of sermons emphasized the need to tailor a sermon to the needs of the audience. While most often the 'theme' of a sermon was drawn from the daily liturgy, a sermon *ad status* would instead focus on what was most relevant to an audience. Étienne composes his *Livre* as a sermon *ad status* but applies a theme only to the paragraphs that address the king and the barons, who were most likely his target audience. He opens the *Livre* with a reference to Ecclesiastes, the book of the Bible believed to have been written by Solomon, which 'enseigne comment deit vivre cil qui l'amor del mont enivre, por ester de pechié delivre' (teaches how one must live who wants to live in love of the world and who wants to be delivered from his sins).⁵⁶ From this he develops the *vanitas*-theme, the transience of all worldly things, and illustrates it with examples relevant to princes, such as the acquisition of lands, castles and a city (st. 4–5) and links it to the typical regal sins of greed and gluttony (st. 10–12). He employs topoi and exempla from the spheres with which his audience was most familiar, such as the case of Alexander the Great, who in his hubris conquered the

⁵⁴ Briscoe and Jaye, *Artes praedicandi*.

⁵⁵ Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre de manières*, ed. by Thomas, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre de manières*, ed. by Thomas, l. 1.

world only to lose everything in death (st. 28–30).⁵⁷ Étienne criticizes the frivolous courtly life and the practice of giving extensive presents to other nobles, accusing the king of neglecting his duty as head of the body politic. Time and again, he peppers his tract with quotations from Ecclesiastes (st. 1, 2, 25, 33, and 37). The *vanitas*-theme prompts him to reject all the worldly pursuits of the king and the high nobility, with which Étienne was intimately familiar, and remind his audience that their position obliges them to establish order in society. While part of their duty is to secure peace and pursue wrongdoers, their most important task is to serve as role models to their people. According to Étienne, the people cannot be expected to be virtuous if they see sinful behaviour in their betters. Étienne points out: ‘Et ce reedit Ecclesiaste | que reis deit estre nez et chaste, | quar li poples cort a grant haste | a vice dom li prince taste’ (And Ecclesiastes says also that a king must be chaste and pure because the people go hastily towards the vice which the prince commits).⁵⁸ The purpose of the *Livre* is to establish a Christian society according to the divine plan. The king is placed at the head of this society and can expect reward in the afterlife if he fulfils his duty:

‘Le reis qui s’est a ce donez | et a ce feire abandonez | ses pechiez avra pardonez | et iert o Dié reis coronez. Et Jhesu Christ, qui tot gouverne, | et terre et mer et ciel superne, | li meite el cor veire luserne | et li otreit vitam eterne’

(The king who is committed to this, and in order to do so leaves behind his sins, will be pardoned and will be crowned king by God. And Jesus Christ, who rules all, land and sea and heaven all above, he puts in the heart the true light and he grants eternal life; st. 46–47).

It has been argued that *sermones ad status* originated from the desire to stabilize social hierarchies at a time in which social boundaries were shifting and in the process of being renegotiated.⁵⁹ Preachers aimed to create a world in which each person would contribute their share to the functioning of the whole. A similar desire to establish a place in the broader scheme and to justify and their own position (and thus distinguish it from that of social climbers) was at the heart of the noble obsession with virtue in

57 Alexander could serve as an example for hubris as well as learned kingship. The *Tugendspiegel* cites the Macedonian as an example of generosity (l. 379) and in the *Secretum secretorum* he and Aristotle form an ideal master–disciple couple. See the multi-volume collection *La fascination pour Alexandre le grand*, ed. by Gaullier-Bougassas which discusses Alexander-narratives across European medieval literatures.

58 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre de manières*, ed. by Thomas, l. 37.

59 Muessig, ‘Audience and Preacher’, p. 261.

the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁶⁰ Authors like Étienne catered for this need for justification while also using it to admonish those in charge to take up their responsibilities in the Christian social order. The sections on the peasants and merchants were surely not destined for the ears of the lower classes, but he might have expected an ecclesiastic readership, at least as a secondary audience. The exclusive focus on noblewomen in the section on female sins confirms this impression.

Étienne fashions his tract after the manner of a sermon and positions himself as a priest. Given his responsibility for the souls of those living in the world, he can criticize the highest ranks of society — since he was likely already a bishop by the time he composed the work, this was a perfectly legitimate vantage point from which to address Henry's court. The priest-persona is developed just before the end of the work and Étienne employs all the usual humility topoi, such as his past interest in the frivolous world (st. 315) and his many bad deeds (st. 317 and 318). He entrusts all the merits of his work to God and calls on a long list of saints to support his own sinful soul (st. 328–33). Far from diminishing his work, Étienne actually increases the authority of his teachings by deferring to a still higher authority. At no point does Étienne include himself in the ranks of his listeners. The few occurrences of *nos* in the work refer to everyone in Christendom,⁶¹ and the final prayer is a solitary one — Étienne praying for his own soul. The author speaks as a figure of authority: he draws clear lines between himself and his audience by using the *sermo ad status* model, with the effect that it suggests the indisputable authority of his teaching.

Dating from around the same time as the *Livre*, the homiletic poem called *Von des Todes Gehugde* (From the Memory of Death) takes a more admonitory tone, but similarly employs the formal features of the sermon *ad status*. The text was composed by one Heinrich, a canon from the Austrian monastery of Melk, and it addresses the vices of clerics and monks as well as those of kings, noblemen, and noblewomen. Unlike Étienne, Heinrich is less concerned about assigning each a place in the functioning of the world, but urges repentance and renunciation of all worldly pursuits. In a similar way to the author of the *Livre*, Heinrich models his tract after the fashion of a sermon, adopting a 'theme', one that in his case runs through large parts of his work — the *memento mori*. He writes: 'Mich laeitet meines gelouben gelvbde, | daz ich von des todes gehvgde | eine rede fvr bringe' (The vows of my faith lead me to speak of the memory of death).⁶² Since Death meets everyone and all must remember

60 Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, p. 48.

61 For example, Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre de manières*, ed. by Thomas, ll. 1145–46: 'Perdu avion la cité | do ciel, qui ert nostre erité' (We have lost the heavenly city which was our heritage).

62 Heinrich von Melk, *Von des todes gehugde*, ed. by Bein, ll. 1–3.

it, this theme serves as a frame for his criticism and admonishment of the different ranks in medieval society, with a focus on the clergy and the secular nobility. His work is divided into two parts: *Vom gemeinen lebene* (On the common life, l. 450) discusses at length the transgressions of the clergy, before Heinrich then moves on to various secular groups, in no coherent order, though his focus is on nobility and the knightly class. The clergy is criticized because they 'habent den namen an daz ambet' (carry the title without fulfilling the duties),⁶³ and even the pope does not meet with Heinrich's approval (l. 398–99). Heinrich accuses the secular elites of hubris and disloyalty. Like Étienne, Heinrich emphasizes order in society and denounces first and foremost those who try to rise above their station or do not fulfil their duties. He does so with much less conceptual clarity than Étienne and often moves back and forth between groups, sins, and topics.⁶⁴

After some 400 lines of complaint about the different social groups, Heinrich picks up his *memento mori* theme again, which he now applies to the worldly life of the knightly class. In this part he introduces several vivid and highly performative scenes that help the audience imagine the vanity of all earthly things in death:⁶⁵ a woman watching the decaying body of her husband, a noble son being admonished by his dead father, and finally Christ himself addressing the audience from the cross. The author explicitly asks the audience to imagine themselves in the positions of the persons addressed in the text — the wife and the son — and eventually addresses them in a long speech in the voice of Christ. The effect is an immediacy and forcefulness that the formal style of the *Livre des manières* cannot achieve. Both Étienne and Heinrich make use of a range of literary strategies, but Heinrich specifically adds feigned orality and invites the readers to empathize with the dead knight and his family, which helps him bridge the gap between himself and his audience in a striking way.

One of the speeches Heinrich includes in this tract is spoken by a father addressing his son. The father–son pairing was already a particularly popular model in didactic writing in Roman literature⁶⁶ and became so again in the vernacular works of the Middle Ages. Casting the *praeceptor* in the role of a father implies a hierarchical relationship, but at the same time an affectionate one. Apart from the classical antecedents, this constellation would perhaps have appealed to didactic writers because they were remi-

63 Heinrich von Melk, *Von des todes gehugde*, ed. by Bein, l. 57.

64 For example, Heinrich von Melk, *Von des todes gehugde*, ed. by Bein, ll. 423–26: 'Die paffen die sint geitic, | die gebovr die sint neidic, | die chovfvt habent triwen nicht, | der weibe chivsche ist enwicht' (The priests are greedy, the peasants are envious, the merchants are disloyal, the women's chastity is lost).

65 Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures*, p. 52.

66 Hirzel, *Der Dialog*, pp. 429–30.

niscent of teaching situations with which their audience were familiar from their own experience. Parents passed on their values and controlled the conduct of their children as a rule, and this authority is visible in didactic texts. Father–son instruction, accordingly, is most frequently presented in the form of a *monologue*, with the son or tutee contributing little or nothing to the conversation. If they speak at all, their contributions are often just confirmations, agreement, or encouragement to the *praeceptor* to continue their instruction. The son is often only implicitly involved in the texts. The father’s direct address evokes the immediacy of face-to-face conversation even where there is none. The fiction of a father teaching his son might have encouraged the audience to accept the advice, as it did in St Louis’s letters to his children. Since the high medieval period, experience had become a legitimate source of knowledge and the parents in didactic texts are frequently described as experienced.⁶⁷ The father in Heinrich’s *Von des todes gehugde* speaks as a former sinner who warns his son against making the same mistakes.⁶⁸ Waters notes that the trope of the teacher who advises from beyond death has a special authority because the ‘perfect understanding granted by death inevitably surpasses any earthly knowledge.’⁶⁹ The experience could also be a positive one, and the father’s good reputation could be emphasized. In the tradition of antique father–son instruction, the didactic ‘I’ in the texts is fashioned as a loving, responsible parent who is particularly valuable as a teacher because he has no selfish intentions (as an advisor might have), but teaches purely in the son’s best interest.⁷⁰ The father in the earlier *Urbain le Courtois* is described as ‘a sage home de grant valour’ (a wise man of great valour) who is thus qualified to teach.⁷¹ In this earlier version, which is directed at a young boy, the father addresses his son frequently and kindly, and phrases his instruction in imperatives.⁷² The impression is one of a stern but loving parent, as opposed to in the later versions, addressed to a young man who has already acquired some standing at court, where the rules and precepts are phrased with equal directness but the addresses and

67 Feros Ruys, ‘Didactic “I”s and the Voice of Experience’, pp. 160–62.

68 Heinrich von Melk, *Von des todes gehugde*, ed. by Bein, ll. 743–48: ‘mein chlage ich nu cespate tuon. | iedoch rat ich dir, lieber suon, | daz du mich ze einem bilde habest | unt der werlt so nicht muot vagest; | du endenchest die not, | die ich besezzten han, | oder es muz dir alsam mir ergan’ (My lament comes too late now. But I advise you, dear son, that you take me as an example and do not succumb to the world like that. Consider the distress that I went through or you will fare like I did).

69 Waters, *Translating Clergie*, p. 61.

70 Feros Ruys, ‘Didactic “I”s and the Voice of Experience’, p. 137.

71 *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, l. 1.

72 For example, *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ‘[II] dist: Beau fitz, ore escotez, | Si jeo die, bien le entendez’ (ll. 7–8); ‘Ore escotez, moun douce enfaunt’ (l. 24); ‘Ne ssez pas trope hastifs, | Ceo vous prie, mound chere fiz’ (ll. 137–38).

terms of endearment are absent.⁷³ In both redactions, there is hardly any exposition of the topic at hand, but rather an unconnected list of things to do or to avoid. The father employs little reasoning and explanations are kept to a minimum — rarely more than two lines. The authoritative manner of the instruction implies that the son (and by extension, the reader) is expected to accept the father's words without further argument. The kind of knowledge conveyed — highly conservative rules of morality and good conduct for pragmatic situations — leave no room for doubt or discussion. Since he does not touch on finer points of moral philosophy, the father's experience lends him sufficient authority and it is both his duty and privilege to pass it on to his son.

We see the same roles in the *Magezoge*. This text employs the voice of a father instructing a son in a similar manner, but frames it with a few lines in the voice of the text itself: 'Ich heize ein spigel der tugende | und ein magzoge der jugende' (I am called a mirror of virtues and a tutor for the youth).⁷⁴ The text itself emphasizes a father's duty to instruct his son in good conduct — 'daz ist gut | nach disem sinne er rehte tuot' (this is right, in this mind-set he acts correctly).⁷⁵ The remainder of the text adopts the form of a direct address by a father to his son. This brief remark emphasizes the father's duty to shape his children (by educating them) just as clearly as in the dedications of antique didactic works to sons. The hierarchical relationship between father and son also explains the preference for the monologic form, whereas tutor-disciple instruction often uses dialogue. Even though the status of a teacher is generally higher than that of his disciple, this is not always the case: in *Der Jüngling*, a tutor of lower rank complains about the misbehaving noble sons and wishes he had the means to chastise them.⁷⁶ In a monastic context there could be a sense of horizontal learning and a general idea of equality of the members (even if this was not often the case in practice).⁷⁷ The father-son relationship, however, is inherently hierarchical and this is seen in the texts' monologic mode of speaking, their authoritative voice, and lack of explanation or justification.

This hierarchical tone of the father-to-son monologues becomes even clearer when we compare them with a monologue portraying a different relationship between speaker and implied audience. In the *Doctrinal Sauvage*, the didactic 'I' addresses the implied disciple(s) respectfully as

73 Only in the prologue is the son called *beau fitz* (l. 5) and *cher fitz* (l. 11).

74 *Magezoge*, ed. by Rosenhagen, ll. 1–2.

75 *Magezoge*, ed. by Rosenhagen, ll. 11–12.

76 In Konrad von Haslau, *Der Jüngling*, ed. by Haupt, ll. 25–33, the narrator wishes he had a fief and could ask a fee from misbehaving young noblemen on his grounds.

77 Examples for teaching situations with no hierarchical structure are collected and discussed in Long, Snijders, and Vanderputten, eds, *Horizontal Learning in the High Middle Ages*.

Signours.⁷⁸ The advice is much less frequently phrased in direct imperatives; instead, the typical stanza consists of a hypothetical situation in which a listener or reader might find themselves, and an explanation of what a particular behaviour would achieve — almost half of the stanzas begin '(et) se', and those that begin with an imperative (roughly the other half) mainly occur in the second half of the text.⁷⁹ The explanations are much more extensive, with stanzas ranging from six to fourteen lines, so that specific advice can be discussed in more detail. This, too, demonstrates a smaller hierarchical distance between speaker and audience, as the latter are not expected to simply accept what they are told but are given the chance to follow the reasoning of the didactic 'I'.

The tradition of father–son instruction implies a clear hierarchical relationship, with little room for the son to discuss or question the teaching. Adaptations of this model exist, however, and where they deviate from the clear asymmetrical set-up, they introduce new roles and achieve very different effects. In the early thirteenth-century poems *Der Winsbecke* and *Die Winsbeckin*, the disciples have much more agency. They demonstrate the potential of more or less symmetrical dialogues that renegotiate the roles between master and disciple and achieve a different didactic outcome.

Dialogues

Dialogue as a means of teaching was particularly popular for the exploration of moral questions, going back to the Socratic dialogues by Plato, though these were not known in the West until the fourteenth century. Some Church fathers employed dialogue for moral investigation, as Augustine did in his *Confessiones* and *Soliloquies* (self-dialogues) composed in the late fourth century, and Boethius in his *De consolazione philosophiae* (c. 524). The Ciceronean dialogue *Laelius de amicitia*, composed in 44 BC, greatly influenced ideals of friendship in the Middle Ages.⁸⁰ Honorius Augustodunnensis, in his *Elucidarium* (c. 1098), revives the dialogue between master and disciple to teach the basics of Christian doctrine to clergy and laity alike. Medieval dialogues vary greatly in the interaction and participation of the interlocutors. In the *Elucidarium*, the disciple initiates the exchange and asks questions, but his function is merely to allow the master to impart his teaching. Literary discussions, characterized by frequent turn-taking and vivid involvement of both speakers, bloomed in Latin literature of the period but occurred less frequently in vernacular literatures. Where they do occur, they take place between representatives

⁷⁸ *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, l. 1.

⁷⁹ *(Et) se* occurs twenty times. Twenty-nine stanzas do not use the *se*-structure, out of which eighteen are direct imperatives, not counting the prologue and epilogue.

⁸⁰ Heusch, 'De amicitia. Penser l'amitié au Moyen Âge', pp. 9–18.

of competing social groups, such as in discussions between cleric and knight, or priest and rabbi. Middle English literature is particularly rich in disputes between allegorical representations such as body and soul or, in the most famous example, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, symbolizing a sombre versus a joyful lifestyle.⁸¹ The reason for the relative rarity of debates in vernacular (moral-)didactic literature lies in the relation between *praeceptor* and *educandus* in the period. In order to maintain a true *dissensio*, in which different opinions can be discussed or the truth developed in an exchange of arguments, the two (or more) interlocutors need to be of equal rank, and the solution to the case — if there is one — must not already be clear from the onset.⁸² In a Latin *dissensio*, the disputants are often two monks who present different but equally informed arguments for a certain problem or interpretation.⁸³ In vernacular moral-didactic writing, the roles of the interlocutors are often that of teacher and disciple or parent and child. The difference in status severely limits the extent to which the receiver of the instruction can participate. In order to allow the lower-status speaker to really make a contribution, either the hierarchical difference must be relatively shallow or the roles need to be reversed — examples of both exist and they achieve very different results.

The *Winsbecke* begins with a lengthy monologue spoken by the father, stretching over fifty-six stanzas (in addition to the two-and-a-half-line narrated introduction of at the beginning). Four main topics dominate the father's teaching: advice on women, knightly duties, courtly conduct, and the government of one's own household. The opening introduces father and son and characterizes the father as wise and the relationship between the two as loving; it also sets out the father's motivation for offering instruction — his good intentions for his son. The father takes the role of the good advisor who teaches in the disciple's best interest. The source of his knowledge is experience: he emphasizes several times his own past at court, as a knight and as the head of a household.

This structure and the general tone of the poem change with the son's reply. While he initially thanks his father for the teaching, as the formulaic

81 Some well-known examples are collected in *Middle English Debate Poetry*, ed. by Conlee.

82 Kästner, *Mittelalterliche Lehrgespräche*, pp. 36–70, offers a typology of different forms of medieval didactic dialogue based on factors such as turn-taking, hierarchy, initiation of the teaching, and compulsion to accept what was taught.

83 Cardelle de Hartmann, *Lateinische Dialoge*, pp. 104–62, lists examples of disputants of technically equal rank but representing different sides, such as a rabbi and a priest. Some Middle English debate achieve their didactic potential precisely because they do not offer a clear solution. For instance, in *The Owl and the Nightingale* the two birds represent a courtly life style and contemplative one, but seemingly neither is given preference. The 'poetics' of such disputes may lay in its potential to entertain as well as to spark discussion. Reed, *Middle English Debate Poetry*.

response requires,⁸⁴ he quickly reveals his distaste for the father's vain and worldly advice. He reproaches the older man for the faults he has accumulated through his life. His advice is 'ill' (*kranc*, st. 59, 8), and the father a bad adviser since he himself is not actually wise, but 'of uneducated manners' (*tumbe[r] siten*, st. 60, 5). The father should atone for his sinful life, give away his possessions to a religious foundation and spend his final years in its seclusion where the son himself would readily join him (st. 61). The father agrees immediately and after a prayer the narration confirms that father and son do indeed follow through with their intention.

The unexpected turn of events is made possible because the hierarchical relationship between father and son is superseded by the stronger model of a young, inexperienced boy educating the older speaker: the *puer senex*.⁸⁵ The child wise beyond his years is a literary topos well known from the biblical scene of the twelve-year-old Jesus teaching in the temple, and it is frequently used in antique and medieval writing.⁸⁶ In the Middle Ages, it is encountered most often in hagiography, to demonstrate the religious calling of a saint in his early days. The son's interjection thus shows his religious vocation through his early understanding of the vanity of worldly life, despite having been brought up by a father who clearly lives a very secular, if honourable, life. This can also explain why the father is quick to comply with the son's demands. In his praise for the son's pious words, he legitimizes the boy's interruption and, on a textual level, acknowledges his role as a *puer senex*. The son has taken on the dominant role in this conversation as his religious knowledge supersedes any secular advice the father could give. The hierarchy in the instruction is reversed. An established model could thus be undermined in order to change the relationship between master and disciple and achieve a different didactic objective: religious conversion rather than courtly conduct. This does not render the courtly advice given by the father irrelevant. It is still useful for those who choose a life in the world and need to learn about moral conduct that will protect their honour. Its relevance is demonstrated by that fact that not all witnesses copy the son's stanzas. Preference is, however, given to a religious life, even though the example of the father demonstrates that one may turn toward it later in life.

The interplay between tutor and disciple in the conversation can be designed in a more nuanced way than that displayed in *Der Winsbecke*, illustrating the didactic process and having the audience participate in it. Unlike *Der Winsbecke*, the interlocutors in *Diu Winsbeckin* genuinely

84 Vollmann, 'Wer wen wie behandeln soll', pp. 55–72, shows the formulaic character of a large part of medieval didactic literature.

85 Bastert, 'Den wolt er leren rehte tuon', p. 317.

86 Carp, 'Puer senex', pp. 736–39. See also Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, pp. 108–09.

engage with each other's arguments. The miniatures that precede the two poems in the Codex Manesse capture the differences in the two dialogues. The image presented with the male-voiced poem (on folio 213^r) shows the father instructing his son, who calmly listens to the instruction. The female-voiced advice poem contains all the features of dialogue: turn-taking, objections, clarifying questions, and persuasion. The miniature in the Codex Manesse for the mother-daughter poem accordingly shows the two women engaged in a lively discussion.⁸⁷ The active participation of the *educanda* gives the poem its distinct form and is employed to develop the argumentation of the instruction. *Diu Winsbeckin* stages the instruction as a quasi-theatrical performance, in which the girl undergoes a transition. Mother and daughter are characterized in their initial statements as pious noblewomen, who are affectionate towards each other. The mother praises the child for her virtuousness while she, in turn, expresses her interest in her mother's advice several times, declaring that she will endeavour to fulfil it as best as she can.

Des volge ich, liebiu muoter, dir, | ich lobe [got], sô ich beste kan.
[...] Rât liebiu muoter, unde sprich, wî und waz dîn wille sî: ich hân
des gar vereinet mich, ich wil dir sîn mit folge bî.

(Dear mother, I will obey you in this and praise [God] as best I can.
[...] Advise me, dear mother, and tell me, what is your wish and
command. I am resolute and I wish to obey and follow you.)⁸⁸

The girl's pious and obedient words in the opening stanzas qualify her for the instruction which now ensues. The actual instruction begins with basic rules on good behaviour, which will communicate her inner quality to the world. The daughter initially agrees with everything and even elaborates on her mother's rules, until the older woman seeks to flatter her with the prospect that, surely, many a man will soon desire her for her virtuous character. At this point the daughter no longer accepts the precepts: 'Sol, muoter, mir daz êre sîn, | ob man mîn wünschet ûf ein strô?' (Mother, is it supposed to honour me, that someone fancies a roll in the hay with me?)⁸⁹ In the remainder of the poem, the mother teaches her daughter the rules of courtly love as it is now her role in society to be pleasant and attract

87 Brügger 'Minne im Dialog' includes the miniatures of both *Winsbecke* and *Winsbeckin* in the Codex Manesse in her analysis of the poems in a productive way (pp. 223–38).

88 *Diu Winsbeckin*, st. 2, 1–2 and 6, 1–4, in *Winsbeckische Gedichte*, ed. by Leitzmann, trans. by Rassmussen and Trokhimenko.

89 *Diu Winsbeckin*, in *Winsbeckische Gedichte*, ed. by Leitzmann, st. 14, 1–2, trans. by Rassmussen and Trokhimenko.

suitors in order to build a reputation: ‘Bistu begêrt, sô bistû wert’ (If you are desired, you are worthy).⁹⁰

The daughter questions and even rejects the mother’s teachings, accuses her of weakness and explains her own perspective. At the point where she accepts that her previous knowledge no longer serves her, she asks her mother to take charge of her decisions as she feels no longer able to care for her own reputation. The mother rejects the notion of *huote* (surveillance) because she wants the girl to ‘use her better judgment, not because she doubts it.’⁹¹ After further discussion, the girl understands her new role in society and the range of actions within it.

Hât mine sô hochgelobete site, | als mir din munt verjehen hât, | daz
ich dâ langer wider strite, | daz wære an mir ein missetât. | sit daz ir hof
in êren stât, | wolte ich gesinde drinne sîn. | ist ez din wille und ouch
din rât, | ob si mich in ir schuole neme, | sô lêre mich ir regel sô, | daze z
mir wol an êren zeme.

(If love has such praiseworthy characteristics as you just told me, it would be wrongdoing if I were to argue any longer. Given that her court is in such an honourable state, I want to be in its entourage. If it is your wish and advice that Love should take me as her disciple, so teach me her rules).⁹²

During the exchange, the mother draws on her experience in the game of courtly love and eventually convinces the daughter to accept her new role in society.⁹³ By the end of the poem, she is no longer only an obedient child but a fully integrated member of the courtly society who is capable of guarding her own reputation and deciding when to accept a suitor. She releases her mother from her responsibility for her conduct: ‘tuon ich niht den willen din, | sô hastu dich enbunden wol | und muoz ich eine schuldic sîn’ (If I fail to do your will, then you will be free of reproach

90 *Diu Winsbeckin*, in *Winsbeckische Gedichte*, ed. by Leitzmann, (st. 15, 10). See the feminist reading of these lines by Rasmussen, “If Men Desire You, then You Are Worthy”, pp. 136–57.

91 Trokhimenko, ‘On the Dignity of Women’, p. 494, original emphasis.

92 *Diu Winsbeckin*, in *Winsbeckische Gedichte*, ed. by Leitzmann, st. 42, 1–10; my translation. The translation by Rasmussen and Trokhimento, ‘Winsbecke’, p. 68, does not include this stanza, as their edition and translation follow Berlin mgf 474, as opposed to the edition by Leitzmann, who produces a composite text. The concluding stanzas are recorded in three manuscripts.

93 The mother ‘als ich ze hove bewiset bin,’ (as I have been taught at court, st. 7, 2); ‘der minne regel ich alle kan’ (I know all the rules of love, st. 43, 3). She teaches from experience, not training, but she is also educated: in her advice she evokes the authority of Ovid (st. 35, 1), refers to courtly literature (11, 7; *Lûnete*), and has heard stories of Salomon (st. 23, 6).

and I alone will be to blame).⁹⁴ She does not only move from rejection of the teaching to acceptance,⁹⁵ but undergoes a transformation from child to *juncfrowe* (unmarried noblewomen). The dialogue allows the author to present not only the roles of the interlocutors (wise mother, inexperienced child) but the process of transforming the girl's role through the effects of the mother's teaching.

Both *Winsbecke* and *Winsbeckin* fashion the parent as a typical good advisor, experienced and full of good intentions,⁹⁶ and both play with the authority of the parental voice: in *Winsbecke* the father's authority is overridden by the religious inspiration of the *puer senex*, while in the *Winsbeckin* the mother's authority is affirmed, but only after a lengthy discussion. The difference from the monologic tracts, even the secular ones, is obvious: the knowledge presented here is up for dispute, the authority of the speaker is not uncontested. Active participation in the teaching is shown to be part of the recipients' learning.⁹⁷ The model used depends on the authority of the teaching — religious truth enjoys a greater authority than courtly rules. While noble boys need to learn about chivalric virtues and how to lead an honourable household, the girls need to learn to protect their reputation while simultaneously attracting the right kind of suitors. The option to withdraw from the world was not offered to the girl whose availability for marriage was of greater use to her family than her taking the veil.

Depending on the social status of those contributing to the conversation, the hierarchies of advice-giving could be steeper (priest admonishing knight, father teaching son) or flatter (mother teaching daughter), the latter allowing the disciple more agency. We also find very active disciples in moral-didactic texts, who initiate the instruction and actively ask questions that direct the topic of the conversation. Their part in the conversation can even outweigh that of the *praeceptor*. In these conversations, the advice is less binding for the disciple since they sought out instruction of their own accord.⁹⁸ On the other hand, we will find that it is virtually mandatory for the *praeceptor* to answer the questions the disciple poses: due to their higher rank they are regarded as responsible for their underlings and thus must have a care for their instruction, a sentiment often repeated in didactic writing.

94 *Die Winsbeckin*, in *Winsbeckische Gedichte*, ed. by Leitzmann, st. 12, 8–10, trans. by Rassmussen and Trokhimenko, pp. 110–11.

95 Brügger, 'Minne im Dialog', p. 238.

96 Wernher von Elmendorf, *Tugendspiegel*, ed. by Bumke, names these two conditions as essential for good advisors (ll. 121–30).

97 Waters, 'Loving Teaching', pp. 303–07.

98 Kästner, *Mittelalterliche Lehrgespräche*, p. 197.

The collection of dialogic poems called *Seifrit Helbling* introduces a very critical disciple who repeatedly challenges and questions the teachings of his master. The poems refer to the *Elucidarium* as its model — in the prologue to poem I, the text calls itself a ‘kleinen Lûcidârius’ (little Lucidarius)⁹⁹ — but the topic and the relationship between the speakers are very different from the all-knowing master and the inquisitive disciple. From the beginning, the master/narrator indicates that he is having some trouble with his disciple’s questions:

Von kinde an han ich her gezogen | einen kneht so betrogen, | der mir
manege lage | legt mit siner frage, | die ich im nu bescheiden muoz.
[...] Dem meister tet der junger | nie die not sust noch so | an dem
buoche Lucidario, die er mir mit frage tuot.

(From childhood on I educated a squire so conceited, who got me in many a situation with his questions, which I have to solve for him. [...] The master is never needlessly brought to distress by the disciple as he does to me with his questions.)¹⁰⁰

Of the fourteen poems in the collection, six are written as dialogues between a knight and his squire and one is a conversation between the knight, the squire, and other interlocutors.¹⁰¹ Within the dialogues, the static order of disciple’s question and master’s answer, as employed by the *Elucidarium*, is completely dissolved. Instead, the reader witnesses lively discussions, quarrelling, joking, mocking, kindness, and support between the two disputants. While the squire asks the questions, he is by no means a passive recipient of the knight’s wisdom. His questions are often introduced by lengthy expositions about social situations he has observed, or contradictions between such situations and generally accepted knowledge — or even teaching he has received from his master. Sometimes, the squire’s poignant questions seem to ridicule the simple answers his master gives him, and often his question is more revealing than the reply. In poem xv, the master remembers a conversation he had with his squire, in which the latter asked him: ‘herr, geruochet ir | eine rede bescheiden mir, | umb waz die liut in Osterreich | gebaren also bluchlich?’ (Master, would you solve

99 *Seifried Helbling*, ed. by Seemüller, poem I, p. 30.

100 *Seifried Helbling*, ed. by Seemüller, poem I, pp. 15–18, 24–27.

101 Note that the Roman numbers by which the poems are designated do not reflect the order in which the dialogue progresses nor the chronological order in which the poems were written, but the order in which they occur in a seventeenth-century copy, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2887. Several attempts to determine a chronology have been made. I follow the order established by Seemüller, *Seifried Helbling*, who makes a mistake himself in the attribution of the poems to the *Lucidarius*-sequence (p. xxx). The order is xiv, v, iv, xii, then the *Lucidarius*-sequence i, ii, iii, iv, xv, viii, ix, the religious poems x, xi, xii, and an allegorical one vii. See Liebertz-Grün, *Seifried Helbling. Satiren kontra Habsburg*, p. 14.

a question for me about why the people in Austria comport themselves in such a reserved manner?')¹⁰² Then he delves into a lengthy *laudatio temporis acti* on the courtly joy of past times (47–63) and contrasts this behaviour with the bleak manners of his own times (64–74). The knight is not at all happy with the squire's criticism and chastises him, stating that he will get his master in trouble with such words:

swic, unwiser kneht! | diniu maer sint mir unreht; du vliusstest mir ane
schult miner lantherren hult.

(Be quiet, foolish squire! Your stories do not please me; you deprive me without my fault of my lord's favour).¹⁰³

This does not prevent the squire from elaborating on his criticism, which he now explicitly connects to the princely court in Vienna, reporting the despicable things he has heard the courtiers say (87–166). The master's only strategy to counteract this slander is to ask him if a specific person was present; when it turns out that he was not, this serves him as an example that good courtiers do exist (167–86). Not only is the part spoken by the squire much longer, but his words are also much more convincing and memorable than the knight's weak retaliation. The example shows how the sharpest criticism of Austrian elite society is voiced by the disciple, not by the master. The dialogue, in this case, allows the author who identifies with the knight to evade the repercussions of such sharp criticism. Occasionally, the knight does not even attempt to stop the squire's sharp tongue, but simply refuses to comment:

gesell, ich bring ez niht für. | so slipfic ist niht die tür | mines mundes,
daz ich sag, | swes ich billich verdag.

(Comrade, I cannot bring myself to it. The door to my mouth is not so permeable that I would say about which I better stay silent. Poem xv, 533–36).

Especially when the criticism attacks the highest social ranks, the knight cautiously stays quiet. In order to allow the squire to voice his critical opinion without compromising the author/master, the poet introduces additional characters (such as the other knights in poem iv) or even more inventive solutions. When the squire criticizes the very government of

¹⁰² *Seifried Helbling*, ed. by Seemüller, poem xv, pp. 37–40.

¹⁰³ *Seifried Helbling*, ed. by Seemüller, poem xv, pp. 75–78. Similar allegations occur several times in the poem, for instance in poem viii, pp. 537–42: 'trütgeselle min, | la din zornrede sin. | man waent liht, ich si schuldec, | daz du bist ungeduldec: | da bin ich gar unschuldich an, wan ich dirs niht erwerben kann' (My friend, stop your angry outburst. People could easily think that it is my fault that you are so harsh: I am free of guilt as I cannot prevent you from it).

Austria, including the duke, and talks about bringing his allegations to the king's ear — who should listen to rich and poor alike — the knight mocks him for his idealism (poem VIII, 53–58). The squire, however, suggests a roleplay in which the knight should play the king and he, the squire, will demonstrate how he would bring forward his complaints (839–44). The master agrees and this allows the squire to voice all his concerns over 155 verses (855–1010). While the master is not uncritical, he complains mainly about peasants, knights, and *ministeriales*, while the high nobility and the clergy can more safely be attacked by the figure of the uneducated squire.

In the course of the collection, we can follow the relationship between knight and squire from the moment the knight takes in the young boy and begins to instruct him (poem I, 15–16) to the point at which the squire completes his education and leaves (poem IX, 136). Their relationship is not static: though the knight has already mentioned at the beginning that the squire's questions caused him some trouble from time to time, in the first two stanzas their relationship is benevolent and friendly. From the third poem onwards, the habitually critical views of the squire become too daring for his master's tastes, though he does not often explicitly contradict his views. As the knight grows older, he is no longer interested in political discussions, and parts with his disciple. Even beyond this point, we see the knight growing older and reflecting on his life and his relationship with the squire (poem X, 56–75). After the squire leaves the knight, the element of social criticism is shelved and the knight turns to question of salvation and the afterlife. The transition in the relationship between knight and squire thus allows the poet to address a wide range of topics, secular and religious, and voice even the harshest criticism. As opposed to many other critical texts of the period, the *Seifried Helbling*-collection is anchored in a specific political context — the transition of government in Austria at the end of the Babenberg dynasty, the Přemyslid interplay, and the beginnings of the Habsburg government. It has been argued that the poems were composed for an audience of lower Austrian local lords, many of which are named in the poems, most prominently the Künring family, who are known to have been patrons of vernacular literature.¹⁰⁴ The general advice about a virtuous noble life would have been relevant for such an audience. The sharpest criticism was directed against the Habsburg dynasty, which is presented as clearly foreign and criticized for introducing new customs and their own political elites into their new domain. For an audience of local lords, this collection would fulfil several functions: firstly, they participate in the moral education of the squire, as he is taught basic values and behavioural norms of the Austrian chivalric society, just as in many other

104 Liebertz-Grün, *Seifried Helbling. Satiren kontra Habsburg*, pp. 23–24. The poems nos VIII, XIII, and XV contain lists of names of local lords.

didactic works. But the *Seifried Helbling*-collection also confirms the virtue of the local lords who are mentioned by name, and their traditional place in Austrian society, while presenting strangers — the Habsburg princes and their people — as disruptive to the virtuous customs and established social order of the duchy. The *Seifried Helbling* poems convey, on the one hand, the duty of the higher ranks to teach their subordinates about their place in that order, and on the other, by undermining the rigid hierarchy laid out by the *Elucidarium*, criticism of the current political situation that (in the eyes of the envisioned audience) contradicts the right order of the society.

Conclusion

It is the right order of the world that moral education serves in the first place: teaching morality and good conduct to individual knights and noblemen and women enables them to take their place in the order of aristocratic society, which is imagined to comply with the divine order of the world and is mirrored in the microcosm of the court. While Étienne de Fougères teaches the king and the princes their responsibility to ensure this order, the didactic works addressed to lower-ranking audiences teach them their respective place in aristocratic society. The authors employ literary models that reflect this order as they mirror hierarchical relationships between masters and disciples. They aim to recreate the personal dimension that characterizes all teaching in medieval society, but especially moral instruction. Letters and treatises allow authors to create a persona for themselves and for their audiences by connecting to cultures of advice that use these forms, from the models of classical antiquity to the advisory letters of bishops to kings. In such texts, authors present themselves as learned and also grant their audiences a place in the learned circle, as they partake in the discourse. Where the thematic structure of the treatise is eschewed in favour of applicable advice, the target audience can be taken as less interested in theoretical discussions than in guidance for living. Here, authors and audiences are no longer part of an imagined community, but rather the texts present the authority of the learned over that of those in charge of practical matters (as seen in the *Tugendspiegel*). The hierarchical relationship is more pronounced, similar to that of the priest preaching to his congregation. Accordingly, ecclesiastical authors leave no space for discussion or the building of a group identity, as we often find in secular instruction. Where religious knowledge uses the fiction of spoken conversation, it allows for little to no active participation on the part of the disciple, whose contribution is usually limited to asking questions that allow the master to unfold his teaching, as in the *Elucidarium*.

Monologues and dialogues repurpose social roles associated with instruction to reflect different hierarchical relationships. Parent–child dialogues (or indeed monologues) frequently present secular themes and are also strictly hierarchical, relating not just to what must have been most people’s lived experience of primary moral education, but also to long-standing literary traditions, reaching back to fathers instructing their sons in Roman society. Parents are fashioned as ideal advisors, as they teach from a place of love and have the listener’s best interests at heart. Their source of knowledge is not institutionalized learning, as it is with clerical teachers, but experience in the society to which they introduce their children, providing them with the knowledge required to excel. If such hierarchies are subverted, this can be explained by the nature of the content that is to be transmitted: in the examples discussed above, the religious orientation of the son counteracts the worldly advice of the father, and explicit criticism of the political situation is placed in the mouth of the squire, who enjoys greater liberty than his master precisely because he is not (yet) educated. Instruction not only acquaints a disciple with the knowledge of a particular society but integrates him or her into its ranks — serving as a kind of ‘rite of passage’ for Christian communion and courtly society alike.¹⁰⁵ Moral education can enable the disciple to participate in this society (as in the case of children who grew up far from the courts), and also to consciously reflect on their role and actively choose to take up their roles within it (as shown by the *Winsbeckin*). Most importantly, however, it *creates* that society, which is essentially a society of values.

¹⁰⁵ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, esp. pp. 93–95. On the transition phase specifically, see Turner, ‘Betwixt and Between’, pp. 23–59.

The Courtly Cosmos

The Court Criticized — The Court Idealized

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, life at the courts was subject of much writing in various genres, and different voices express views that range from idealization to condemnation. The court critics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries presented the courts as hotbeds of deceit and ambition, where each and every member of this society only ever acted in pursuit of their own best interests, mainly by scheming against competitors and flattering the lord.¹ At the same time, courtly literature presented the courts as centres of erudition, refinement, and virtue — indeed, as the very places where such qualities could be learned and would be rewarded. One is tempted to attribute the different depictions of the court to the different authors and audiences of such texts: court criticism in the high medieval period was often written by clerics for clerics, and predominantly in Latin. The clerical critique of the courtier was feeding on a wider discontent in society with the dysfunctionality of the courtly ideal. Vernacular authors, too, deplored especially the flattery of courtiers.² The rare occasions in which the addressee is a layman, as in the case of Jean de Limoges, who writes his *Somnium morale Pharaonis* (c. 1210/1220) for Count Thibaut IV of Champagne, the courtly life is presented as a place in which a skilled courtier could contribute to the common good.³ It seems that clerical court criticism is as much a justification of the clerical life as it is condemnation of the vanity of the world. On the flip side, courtly literature presents the court as the place where morals could be learned and good conduct acquired, and where the world could be held in balance when all behaved according to their roles. Scholars have dismissed imaginative literature as fictional idealization, just as exaggerated as the clerical condemnation of the courts. Clerical and lay voices, they have argued, necessarily expressed opposing views on courts.⁴

1 Peter of Blois, *Epistulae*, ep. 14, ed. by Migne, 39–51, col. 47A; similar sentiments are expressed by Walter Map in his *De nugis curialium* or John of Salisbury, in his *Policraticus*.

2 Kay, ‘The Contradictions of Courtly Love’, pp. 208–11.

3 *Morale somnium Pharaonis*, ed. by Constantin Horváth, p. 92 (ep. 10).

4 Cf. Schnell, ‘“Curialitas” und “dissimulatio”’, pp. 97–100.

The ambivalence of the courts posed a threat, especially to its clerical members. The term 'courtier' was originally used to denounce clerics who sought to gain higher church office in the service to a king, as in Peter Damian's famous *Contra clericos aulicos*.⁵ Peter's criticism betrays the fact that the reason the benefits the court cleric earned were a problem was (at least in part) because of the Church structure, which could not supply clerics with attractive positions that enabled their independence from royal favour.⁶ The problem persisted through the Church reform. The Angevin court of Henry II was subject to particularly frequent criticism,⁷ which was probably a result of the shifts in administration that took place during Henry's reign which made educated courtiers necessary and offered rich churches, cathedral stalls, archdeaconries and bishoprics as prizes which could be worth more than parcels of land, and did give the lucky beneficiary insurance against disfavour, since they were for life. Favour at the courts thus provided splendid occasions to improve a person's standing. The nobility complained about the number of lowly knights who rose to office and supposedly corrupted courtly society,⁸ whereas learned men attacked their fellow clerics for their ambition and the moral blemish they incurred in an attempt to gain 'riches, the chances of dignities, which friendship to magnates can bestow', as Peter of Blois put it in a dialogue between a *dehortans a curia* and a *curialis*.⁹ Peter's judgement of the court varied in his letters, possibly due to his disappointment regarding his own career.¹⁰

Moral-didactic writing blossomed at the same time as court criticism and was also frequently composed by clerics. It promotes virtues very similar to those in courtly romance but equally criticizes courts for their potential to breed schemes and misconduct, just as court criticism does. This tension is striking, in particular when we remember that moralists considered ethics a practical science. In the tradition of Cicero and other classical authorities, they claim that knowledge of morality and habitually acting according to it would gain a person honour and reputation and thus would be rewarded in polite society. If that was true and the teaching provided in didactic writing were indeed the knowledge needed to navi-

5 Petrus Damianus, *Contra clericos aulicos, ut ad dignitates provehantur*, ed. by Migne, pp. 463–72.

6 Lally, 'Secular Patronage at the Court of Henry II', p. 168.

7 Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, pp. 138–41; see also Uhlig, *Hofkritik*, p. 67.

8 Turner, 'Changing Perceptions', p. 94.

9 Dronke, 'Peter of Blois and Poetry', p. 207.

10 Southern, 'Peter of Blois: A Twelfth-Century Humanist?', p. 107. Epistula 14 condemns courtiers, Ep. 6 and 150 argue in their favour. Peter of Blois, *Epistulae*, ed. by Migne. Also see Turner, 'Toward a Definition of the Curialis', p. 8.

gate the courts,¹¹ why would some rather resort to immoral deeds to gain success?

Michel de Certeau, in his chapter 'Walking the City', provides an interesting model through which courtly life, as seen through didactic writing, can be studied.¹² Just as the city in Certeau's work is conceptualized as a whole but appropriated and lived in by individuals according to their own needs and plans, the court could be envisioned as a model society in which everyone had their place and role and fulfilled it with joy. The individuals who frequented the courts, from the king to the lowliest servant, would nevertheless make use of the structures and possibilities it provided to further their own personal agendas. This chapter argues that courts were supposed to be ideal communities, and that this ideal should be discernable in the interactions taking place among courtiers and between courtier and lord. The first part argues that courts were perceived as potentially didactic environments that served both to improve the honour of individuals and to elevate the entirety of noble society. The second part explores the specific rules that regulated interaction at court. It argues that such regulation was necessary because the courts consistently fell short of their own ideals, as their members learned to use the rules for their own benefits without understanding of the virtues they were meant to codify. We will see that authors strived to reconcile the inner and the outer — that is, to harmonize morality and good conduct and thus to stabilize the courtly cosmos.

The Court as Formative Environment

The court fulfilled many functions — social, cultural, political — and accordingly courtiers had a number of possibilities to benefit from the courtly environment. Didactic authors frequently mention the possibilities for young men who come to a court to associate with *sage hommes* (wise men, as they are called in the *Urbain le Courtois*) or the *werden* (the worthy, as the *Winsbecke* calls them), and keep the company of those who are well established at the court. Honour by association provided the horizontal basis for noble legitimation — *parage* — where genealogy provided the vertical — *lineage*.¹³ The opportunities for networking were probably an important reason for parents to send their sons to other courts for education. Just as in schools and universities, networking and learning

11 Sometimes referred to as 'symbolic knowledge' or 'Orientierungswissen', cf. Schneider, 'Einleitung: Ethik – Orientierungswissen?', pp. 11–23. The term 'symbolic knowledge' was coined by Santayana, 'Literal and Symbolic Knowledge'.

12 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 91–110.

13 Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*, p. 87.

went hand in hand. In the case of the court, however, the company itself was considered essential to the didactic programme. In the company of the other courtiers, young people were expected to learn courtly conduct by imitation. They would initially be corrected by their peers and their betters and later correct others. In this way they would ideally become loyal and trusted courtiers and earn renown for their good understanding. At the courts, one should both give advice and take it, and thus contribute to the general improvement of the courtly cosmos.

Learning by Imitation

A central principle of learning in the Middle Ages was imitation. Didactic writing, historiography, and letters relied on the power of exemplum not just to demonstrate negative cases but to provide role models on which the reader could pattern their own behaviour.¹⁴ Part of the appeal of the educational ideal of chivalry was the *imitatio Christi* aspect of the hardship the Christian knights had to endure.¹⁵ Among the media that conveyed moral education, the physical bodies of exemplary men and women and the stories that related their virtuous deeds featured prominently.¹⁶ Hincmar of Reims had already in the tenth century described the court as a school that taught by example and the sentiment survived, despite the flourishing court criticism of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹⁷ Thomasin von Zerklare also believed in the court's edifying potential, though he had to acknowledge that it often failed to achieve this task:

Swenn si von hove komen sint, | sô suln dan diu edeln kint | gedenken
ân schallen in ir muot | 'alsô tet hiute der riter guot | ze hove, ich wil
michs vlîzen hart | daz ich kome in sîne vart'. | swer niht merket daz er
siht, | ern bezzert sich dâ von niht. | im möhte sîn alsô mære | daz er
dâ ze holze wære | sô dâ ze hove. dâ von sint | dick von hove komen
töerschiu kint, | daz ein kint niht merken kan | waz ze hove tuot ein
biderb man. | [...] swenn si ie mër ze hove sint, | sô si ie mër werdent
enwiht; | si merket daz böes, daz guote niht. | Ich wil ouch daz mîniu
kint | diu von adel komen sint | handeln ir gesellen wol.

(When they return from the court I want the noble children to think without noise in their mind: 'This is what the good knight did today at court; I will make every effort that I will follow in his path'.

14 On exemplum, see *Rhétorique et histoire*. On imitation as a didactic principle, cf. Hartmann, 'Imitation als Prinzip der Lehre?', pp. 73–88.

15 Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*, pp. 120–23. For a discussion of this aspect of the ideal, especially in German didactic writing, see Wittig, 'Teaching Chivalry'.

16 Reinl, *Lebensformung durch Medien*, pp. 145–46.

17 Jaeger, 'Cathedral Schools and Humanist Learning', p. 609.

Who does not acknowledge what he sees will not improve by it. It would be as useful for him to be in the woods as to be at court. This is why foolish children often come from the court, because they cannot recognize what a courtly man does. [...] The longer they are at court the more they become useless; they see the bad, but not the good. I want my children who are of noble descent to treat their peers well.)¹⁸

Thomasin describes the court as, potentially, a place of refinement of manners and learning of good conduct. If it fails to meet this noble standard it is because of the lack of interest displayed by young people who do not imitate the behaviour of the *biderb man*. In Thomasin's vision, young boys and girls would find role models at the courts whose behaviour would inspire them to pursue virtues themselves, and through imitation of whom they could develop into well-formed members of the courtly society. In an interplay of personal effort and the social context which shape them, the norms of the court would become part of their habitus in a Bourdieuan sense.¹⁹

This notion, laid out in the first book of his *Der Welsche Gast*, is addressed to young boys and girls but mirrored in the brief education specifically addressed to the lords with which the second book opens.²⁰ The second book aims to teach *ritr*, *vrouwen*, and *phaffen* — the pillars of courtly society — but its very first chapter is dedicated to the lords of the courts. Their responsibility is much greater, as any misconduct would affect everyone, but moreover they are supposed to serve as an example to the entire court. According to Thomasin, lords are supposed to provide an ideal image to everyone else — which he describes as a mirror — so that others can imitate their example: 'an den vürsten und an den herren: | von den schint guot bild von verren' (from the princes and the lords good example radiates widely).²¹ The same sentiment is expressed in the *Livre des Manieres*, in which Étienne states that the people should imitate their lord's conduct.²²

18 Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, ll. 337–68, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell.

19 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 170.

20 Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, ll. 1715–1836.

21 Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, ll. 1717–18, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell.

22 'Rele et exanple est dux et reis | aus chevaliers et aux borseis, | et aus vilains et aus corteis [*vilains* here does not mean *villains* I think. The opposition is with *corteis*: it's a frequent pairing meaning courtly and uncourtly]: | lors feiz lor sunt receiz et leis' (Rule and model are prince and king to knights and burghers, to the uncourtly and courtly: their deeds are statement and law; Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des Manieres*, ed. by Thomas, st. 38, ll. 149–52).

The 'mirror' is a central image in the didactics, especially for lay people in the high Middle Ages. The numerous texts entitled 'mirrors' testify to this, not just in moral education but among books of natural philosophy and history as well.²³ Like a mirror, a book can provide an image, and in the case of moral instruction the observer is meant to match their own appearance against it.²⁴ For Thomasin and his fellow moralists, the princes and lords themselves serve as ideal images that must be imitated. Thomasin elaborates his mirror-metaphor well beyond the usual pattern of ideal and imitation:²⁵ he observes that uneven mirrors display distorted images that cannot serve for imitation. Introducing his main virtue, he encourages the lords to be *staete* ('steadfast') in order to be worthy of imitation.²⁶ Thomasin integrates his distrust of appearances into his mirror-metaphor to caution the readers, but *imitatio* is nonetheless central in his conception of moral education, especially but not exclusively for young people.

The expansive illustration programme in manuscripts of *Der Welsche Gast*, which provide imagery for abstract teachings, serves precisely this purpose: the images foster the reception of the book as a mirror.²⁷ Learning from a book can thus also follow the didactic model of learning by imitation, a notion already present in the *speculum*-literature. In the absence of virtuous courtiers, Thomasin also recommends courtly literature to young people as a model to imitate, as does a manuscript of the later *Urbain le Courtois*.²⁸ Along the same lines, Godfrey of Viterbo offers the stories of past kings as exempla to the young Henry VI in his *Speculum regum*, while the *Kaiserchronik* presents the history of the kings and popes in the Roman Empire as didactic models.²⁹

The preferred models in such texts, however, are the virtuous people at the courts. Authors invariably suggest that young courtiers associate with wise and courteous people and imitate their conduct, so that they can

23 Magezoge, ed. by Rosenhagen, l. 1: *ih bin ein spigel der tugent*; see also the *Miroir du monde*, *Speculum historiale*, *Speculum anime*, etc. Cf. Bradley, 'Backgrounds of the Title *Speculum* in Mediaeval Literature', pp. 100–15.

24 Genet, 'Conclusion', pp. 405–23.

25 '[W]ir suln uns gar an iu schouwen: | ir sit der spiegel, wir die vrouwen' (We should reflect ourselves in you with pleasure: you are the mirror, we are the ladies); Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, ll. 1761–62, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell.

26 Schanze, *Tugendlehre*, p. 120.

27 The Middle High German idiom *ze bilde nemen* for 'to take as example' encompasses a greater range of visual models for imitation, such as role models, exempla, memories, and imagination; see Schanze, *Tugendlehre*, pp. 111–12, esp. n. 222 for further literature.

28 MS Selden supra 74 includes advice to imitate Roland, Olivier, Gawain, King Arthur, Horn, and Ypomedes, literary heroes of French medieval romance. Earlier *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 67–84.

29 Gottfried of Viterbo, *Speculum regum*, ed. by Waitz, pp. 21–93; *Die Kaiserchronik*, ed. by Schröder, pp. 79–392.

themselves become models to others. The court as a whole is meant to be a model to the world, the courtly society an idealized microcosm. Each individual courtier carries a responsibility not just for their own behaviour but for that of others, in two ways: the courtier is supposed to be a role model in terms of good morality and conduct and, if imitation fails, gently correct their peers and inferior courtiers' behaviour.³⁰

Mutual Correction

Just as the lords were obliged to serve as role models, their superior access to moral education was thought to put them in charge of their people's morality. The responsibility of an educated person for the education of another is emphasized in several poems. This is particularly addressed to the lords who have better access to education and a responsibility for the morality of their household and the knights in their service.³¹ A nobleman is equally obliged to watch over the honour of his friends and peers. Despite the competition at the courts, where an individual knight or courtier aims to burnish his reputation as much as he can — even, according to frequent complaints, if it meant compromising another person's good name — authors often urge noblemen not to scold and instead to help others live a virtuous life. Thus they try to keep the general level of noble morality high, rather than merely helping an individual nobleman to appear virtuous in the eyes of others.

While we should not assume that lords personally taught their servants lessons in morality, we know that in some cases tutoring was provided for young courtiers. Indications of tutoring are much rarer than of learning by imitation, though we know that it took place. The young men who kept the son of a lord company would have been taught alongside him by his tutor, as we know from the sons of kings and princes.³² The records from smaller courts, too, sometimes include the costs for a tutor in residence, though the terms in which they were referred to often obscure their function.³³ The *Urbain le Courtois* provides us with an example that explicit teaching could be included in the courtly education of young boys.

³⁰ Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*, pp. 109–21.

³¹ '[d]az si ir ere behalden | di an si iz geerbet' (that they should preserve their honour which they have inherited); Wernher von Elmendorf, *Tugendspiegel*, ed. by Bumke, ll. 788–89; 'saltu gesinde habin mit erin, du salt si dine sitin lerin' (if you want servants with honour, you shall teach them your habits); ll. 977–78.

³² Orme, 'The Education of the Courtier', p. 52.

³³ Titles such as *maistre* or *meister* that referred to learned men at the courts do not allow us to draw conclusions about their tasks, nor can we assume that they fulfilled only one. Aurell, *Le chevalier lettré*, p. 56.

Et si les escoles volez haunter | vostre maistre devez duter | Et la
mestrés ensement, | l'un et l'autres sur apent; | Et si vous savez voster
lesçoun | Avant ke toun compaignoun | Voluntiers lui apernez | Et
belement a lui parlez, | Et ceo vous doint nurreture, | courtesie et
mesure.

(And if you wish to go to school you must honour your master and
equally your mistress, both of them as it befits; and if you know
your lesson before your companions, be willing to educate him and
speak nicely to him and this gives you a good education, courtesy
and moderation.)³⁴

These lines do not just indicate that schooling and tutoring could be part
of the courtly education but also that learning and mutual correction were
imagined in company.

It is a trope well known from classical literature on friendship that
friends in particular were meant to correct each other out of care for
each other's honour.³⁵ Mutual love was a requirement for teaching and
learning.³⁶ Such rules circulate in the twelfth century in the *Moralium
dogma philosophorum* and its various translations and adaptations.³⁷ The
Tugendspiegel stresses that loyal friends should assist one another in main-
taining and defending their honour. Friends were to keep each other's
secrets (ll. 703–04) and to promote the other's praise (l. 694). The explicit
advice is to 'sezze alle din ere an dines frundes hant' (put all your honour
in your friend's hand).³⁸ Thus, any correction among friends should allow
them to keep their reputation intact and, by implication, happen in private.

³⁴ Earlier *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 94–104.

³⁵ Cicero, *Laelius de amicitia*, XIII. 44, trans. by Falconer: 'Haec igitur prima lex amicitiae sancitur, ut ab amicis honesta petamus, amicorum causa honesta faciamus, ne exspectemus quidem, dum rogemur; studium semper adsit, cunctatio absit; consilium vero dare audeamus libere. Plurimum in amicitia amicorum bene suadentium valeat auctoritas, eaque et adhibeatur ad monendum non modo aperte, sed etiam acriter, si res postulabit, et adhibitae pareatur'. (Therefore let this be ordained as the first law of friendship: Ask of friends only what is honourable; do for friends only what is honourable and without even waiting to be asked; let zeal be ever present, but hesitation absent; dare to give true advice with all frankness; in friendship let the influence of friends who are wise counsellors be paramount, and let that influence be employed in advising, not only with frankness, but, if the occasion demands, even with sternness, and let the advice be followed when given.)

³⁶ Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, pp. 61–62, emphasizes the role of love in the relation between teacher and student but we know the same to be true for the type of the good advisor, who should advise from a place of love, especially from parent–child teaching; cf. Chapter 2.

³⁷ *Das Moraliū dogma philosophorum*, ed. by Holmberg, I. B. 2. b II. 8. 'De amicitia: Hec quidem lex est in amicitia ut neque rogemus res turpes, nec faciamus rogati. Alia lex est ut cum amico cuncta deliberes, sed prius de ipso' (On friendship: This is the rule in friendship that we neither ask shameful things nor do them if asked. The other rule is that you ponder with a friend everything, but primarily about himself).

³⁸ Wernher von Elmendorf, *Tugendspiegel*, ed. by Bumke, l. 709.

An indirect quotation from Sallust states that friends ‘shall remind one another quietly of their honour’ (l. 691).³⁹

This ideal friendship was based on a shared search for virtue. Such a model was transmitted by classical Latin works as a marker of an aristocratic society in which men were capable of such elevated emotions. Medieval authors were able to cite Cicero himself as a prominent advocate of noble friendship⁴⁰ and no less a figure than Augustine for the corrective influence of a loyal friend.⁴¹ The high medieval treatises knew the ideal of mutual perfecting from the Nichomachean Ethics.⁴² In the works written for the edification of the court, courtiers in general are envisioned as a community of noble friends, an ‘impersonal form of “amicitia”, as McEvoy has called it.⁴³ The court becomes a community of individuals who are supposed to care for each other’s honour in the way that loyal friends do.

The *Doctrinal* holds its audience responsible not only for their own moral improvement but also for that of their peers. If a man fails to act in the right way (*mesprendre*; VIII, 1), he should not be rudely reproached (*laidement reprendre*; VIII, 2). Instead one could try to ‘courtoisement enseigner et apprendre’ (courteously instruct and teach) so that he would ‘au bien [...] revenir et reprendre’ (turn back to and pursue the good).⁴⁴ It is courteous behaviour to correct one’s peers and instruct them in good behaviour, while reproaching other people’s shortcomings indicates poor moral qualities in the speaker.

However, the *Doctrinal* also accounts for the possibility that advice might not always be taken graciously:

S’aucunes hom vous fait bien sa bonté essauchiés; | S’il a mauvaises
teches tous cois vous en taisiés, | Se che n’est a conseil que vous le
castijés. | Et s’il ne vous veut croire tout en pais le laissiés: | Puis k’il
vous fera bien pour quoi le blasmeriés! | Chelui qui bien vous fait
onques ne despisiés: | U vous foi li portés u du tout l’esloigniés, | Car li
hom est trop faus, vilains, outrequidiés | Quant il blasme chelui de qui
il est aidiés.

(If any man makes you honour his virtue but has bad characteristics, you remain silent about them, if it is not advisable that you chastise him. And if he does not want to believe you, leave

39 Similar rules were found by Doris Ruhe in later medieval didactic texts specifically for wives; Ruhe, ‘Diskretion, Ehre und Alltagsmoral’, pp. 135–56.

40 Cicero, *Laelius de amicitia*, 5. 15, trans. by Falconer: ‘hoc primum sentio, nisi in bonis, amicitiam esse non posse’ (friendship cannot exist except among good men).

41 Jaeger, ‘The Friendship of Mutual Perfecting’, p. 187.

42 *Nichomachean Ethics* 8. 2–4 9. 12. 3, 1172a, discussed by Jaeger, ‘The Friendship of Mutual Perfecting’; see also Cicero, *Laelius de amicitia*, 9. 32 and 25. 91.

43 McEvoy, ‘The Theory of Friendship’, p. 12.

44 *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, st. VIII, 4.

him all in peace: because he would retaliate heavily for the thing that you blamed him! Never despise the one who does you good: either you take it with faith or reject all of it. Because a man is very corrupt, evil and presumptuous when he blames the one by whom he is helped.)⁴⁵

Once again, the court is likely to fall short of its ideal: instead of gently correcting each other and gracefully accepting correction, the competition at the courts and the vanity of the courtiers prevent the collective efforts for improvement. Thus, even among friends, correction must be regulated. A public correction would perhaps damage the person's pride, so secret admonishment is encouraged in order that the other's honour does not suffer. Secret correction prevents conflict and maintains the joyful courtly atmosphere. If the person so chastised shows no interest in improving their faulty behaviour, the courtier has done his duty and can now benefit from the shortcomings of the other person. Such advice acknowledges the harsh reality of courtly society and demonstrates that even those writers who aim for the ideal of the court-as-learning-environment make concessions. Reputation at the court is a competition: the worse another appears for his faults, the better it is for the good courtier, who has even tried to prevent the other from misbehaviour. In this courtly minefield, it is important to learn the tools that will help the courtier to react to criticism appropriately and with grace.

This implies, too, that any courtier must learn to closely monitor his own behaviour, to discover any flaws before others can. The *Doctrinal* advises:

'Et s'il a en vous teche qui trop i mesaviegne | Ostés le ensus de vous que jamais n'i reviegne; | Nus ne maintient folie que ja biens l'en n'aviegne'

(And if there is moral blemish in you which brings misfortune, remove it from yourself so that it will never come back; no one persist in folly from which no good ever comes.)⁴⁶

These examples demonstrate that courtly society was supposed to correct itself and each other. The community of good people should offer a model for imitation and if this did not do the job, gentle correction was needed. Ultimately, however, didactic authors were aware that it was in the power of the lord to control the virtue and good conduct of his court by promoting desirable behaviour. As much as Thomasin believes in the mutual correction of courtiers and tries with his own work to encourage

⁴⁵ *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, st. xvi.

⁴⁶ *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, st. xiv.

good conduct in them, he admits that they cannot be expected to act virtuously if sinful behaviour is what earns them rewards:

Ein ieglich man tuot gerne daz | dâ von man in handel baz. | man
handelt tugenthafte liute bi alten ziten baz dan hiute, | dâ von wurvens
vast nâch tugent. | nu handelt man baz die untugent | dan die
tugent [...] | Kunt ze hove ein biderbe man, | den wil der herr niht
sehen an: | kumt aver dar ein boesewiht, | der kumt ân ère wider niht. |
[...] Seht, daz ist der herren schulde! [...] | ein man tæť dicke daz er
solde, | ob man in dâ von êren wolde. | die herren mugen schaffen wol |
daz man tuo daz man tuon sol. | wie mugen si tuon daz? | êren die
vrumen baz | dan die boesen: wizzt vür wâr, | si lâzent ir bôsheit gar. |
ob aver daz nu niht geschiht, | si sint des âne schulde niht.

(Any man prefers to act in a way that earns him better treatment. Virtuous people have in ancient times been treated better than today, which made them strive harder for virtue. Today, iniquity is treated better than virtue [...] When a good man comes to court, the lord does not want to see him: but if a villain comes, he does not return without honour. [...] See, it is the lord's fault! [...] A man would frequently do as he should if he was honoured for it. The lords can well ensure that one does as he should. How can they do this? By honouring the honest more than the bad: Know well that they would let go of their wickedness. That this does not happen, of this they [the lords] are not innocent.)⁴⁷

According to Thomasin, the reality of courtly life treats dishonourable people better than virtuous men. It requires a virtuous lord to run a court of virtuous people. Moralists like John of Salisbury refer to medieval society as a body, whose ill head would spread its disease to the entire body, an allegory for the interplay between a lord and his people.⁴⁸ According to John and his contemporaries, it is also in the interest of the lord that his people are honourable and virtuous: part of their function is to provide counsel, and no good counsel can be expected of those who act predominantly in their own best interest.

A Culture of Counsel

The topic of counsel features frequently in advice literature, both for courtiers and for lords. Both taking and providing counsel were skills that

47 Thomasin von Zerclaere, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 6291–370.

48 Nederman, 'Organic Metaphor in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*', pp. 211–23. See also Shogimen, 'Treating the Body Politic', pp. 77–104.

had to be learned. The lord's duty to seek counsel before taking action was adopted from classical authors and promoted in medieval works.⁴⁹ In the Empire, counsel was part of the oath of fealty given to a lord by his vassal, and we know that the princes considered it not just their duty but also their right to advise the king.⁵⁰ Where political power was based on consent from the princes, their counsel was more than just advice but an expression of their will. The charters issued in important matters of the Empire therefore referred frequently to both counsel and consent of the princes.⁵¹ In England, the king's council developed into a powerful institution in the later Middle Ages, especially when the king was enfeebled or a minor.⁵² In France, despite the development toward greater royal authority since Philip II Augustus, the role of the Great Council grew and Louis IX, in particular, reigned in accordance with the princes' advice. Under the authoritarian rule of Philip III, the role of the Great Council declined but this king, too, heard the advice of the nobles, notably his chamberlain Enguerrand de Marigny, much to the dismay of the *Ligue nobiliaire*.⁵³ Marigny was frequently represented as an evil advisor, as his counsel did not aim to increase the 'honour and glory' of the kingdom. Instead, his comparatively low birth, his advice concerning fiscal politics, several charges of bribery, and finally charges of sorcery against him made Enguerrand the epitome of a bad advisor in the eyes of the princes and contemporary chroniclers.⁵⁴

The type of the *bad advisor* became a staple in the literature of the court, both didactic and literary. As it was often difficult to criticize a lord or king directly, much of the criticism could be diverted to the people who influenced his (bad) decisions.⁵⁵ While this took some of the responsibility for failure or poor decision-making away from the lord, it also deprived him of some of his agency. After all, a good ruler should be able to pick good advisors. The importance of taking advice and listening to the right people was emphasized in most mirrors of princes in the Middle Ages.⁵⁶

49 Antonin, *The Ideal Ruler*, pp. 312–17 and most recently Vercamer, *Hochmittelalterliche Herrschaftspraxis im Spiegel der Geschichtsschreibung*, pp. 195–97.

50 Cf. Weiler, *Kingship*, pp. 39–43, on counsel as a way of legitimizing a revolt and refusal to listen to counsel as a reason to start one in the revolt of Henry (VII) against Emperor Frederick II.

51 Schneidmüller, 'Konsensuale Herrschaft', p. 62: 'Hec omnia acta sunt consensu et consilio principum'. Similar examples exist from the earlier French charters.

52 Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, p. 3.

53 Canteaut, 'Le roi de France gouverne-t-il par conseil?', p. 160.

54 Favier, *Un conseiller de Philippe le Bel*, pp. 195–99; discussed in Canteaut, 'Le roi de France gouverne-t-il par conseil?', p. 160–61.

55 Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, p. 3.

56 Ptolomy of Lucca, expanding on the work of Thomas Aquinas, recommends counsel but does not consider it a royal duty (Blythe, *Ideal Government*, pp. 114–15). A common reference in this discourse was a quotation from Solomon: 'The way of a fool is right in his

The ability to accept correction and consult with good advisors was part of the ideal to which kings and lords should aspire. Even in the ideal monarchy Giles of Rome promoted in his work, advisors played a central and somewhat independent role.⁵⁷

Classical authors had already acknowledged that not everyone was equally fitted to give good counsel and emphasized the importance of the right motivation: the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* quotes Sallust, Salomon, Cicero, Boethius, and Seneca on the topic, in relation to the virtue of *providentia*.⁵⁸ In the *Tugendspiegel*, this passage is moved to the very beginning of the instruction (ll. 73–234). Wernher begins with a comprehensive treatment of the role of advice in good living and government, the criteria for distinguishing good and bad advisors, and the perils of bad advice. He illustrates this by the *exemplum* of King Xerxes of Persia, which he subsequently interprets for the audience. The topic was understandably central to his didactic enterprise as Wernher, too, was advising his audience and needed to secure their attention. In this section, Wernher elides the division between *utilis* and *honestum* that structures his sources and specifically applies this unity (which in the *Moralium dogma* is only reached at the conclusion) to counsel. Since the honourable is always also of the greatest use, good counsel must combine both. His description of good advisors follows equally traditional topoi: good advisors must be virtuous, wise, and foresighted (according to Cicero), and consider all possible outcomes (following Boethius), but most importantly they must advise honestly and in the lord's best interest. A trustworthy advisor cares for the lord's honour and counsels with no regard to their own interest.

Above all, the good advisor must not be a flatterer. *Tugendspiegel* emphasizes strongly that lords must listen more to the counsel of those who criticize them than to those who flatter. The disastrous outcome of bad counsel by flattery is exemplified by the episode of Xerxes asking for advice about the planned invasion of Greece. Five advisors greatly exaggerate the power of his army; only his guest, the Spartan king Demeratus, warns Xerxes that the invasion would be disastrous. This historical example would become increasingly popular in the twelfth and thirteenth

own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel' (Proverbs 12: 15); see also Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum*, ed. by Briggs, p. 69, and the *Secretum secretorum*, v, p. 41: 'si velit sibi consulere, debet cum summa diligencia providere virum unum fidelem, discretum, et electum de multis, cui debet committere res publicas disponendas, et regni divicias gubernandas' (If he [the king] wishes to consult, he must, with the highest diligence, provide a single man, loyal, discrete and selected out of many, and commit to him to order the public affairs and to manage the riches of the kingdom).

⁵⁷ Giles of Rome, *De regimine principum*, I, 2. 8, 1. 4. 5, 2. 3. 18, 3. 2. 4, 3. 2. 17–19; cf. Briggs, *Giles of Rome's 'De regimine principum'*, p. 61.

⁵⁸ *Das Moraliū dogma philosophorum*, ed. by Holmberg, I. A. 1. *De prouidentia*.

centuries as Xerxes was fashioned into the exemplar of bad kingship, as opposed to the ideal king represented by Leonides.⁵⁹

To ensure that his exemplum was understood, Wernher summarizes: 'Nu merke an disme gedichte, wedir man mit mereme rechte volge zu den erin den valshen lugenerin oder den stetin luten, di di warheit wol kunnen beduten' (Now see in this story if you should more rightfully follow perfidious liars for the sake of your honour or loyal people who could point out the truth for you).⁶⁰ The ideal advisor is characterized by the same qualities that should be possessed by the ideal courtier: virtue, wisdom, and a primary interest in the honour of his friends, in this case, his lord. For this reason, trusted advisors were, according to some authors, best recruited from among the princes and other nobles, as it was in their interest to increase the honour of the kingdom and they were less likely to try and advance their own careers. On this, Thomasin von Zerklare, otherwise rather critical of powerful men, agrees with Giles of Rome.⁶¹

Didactic texts addressed to courtiers frequently mention that possession of the above qualities meant a courtier could become a trusted advisor and thus advance his career. From the frequent complaints, we know that a popular way to get into a lord's good books was to advise them according to what they desired to hear. Didactic texts both discourage courtiers from doing so and remind lords not to listen to such flattery.

Si sage home devenez | De ceo vos bien avisez: Si nulli devez
conseiller | Qui ad a vous grant mester, | Lui conseillez solumn la
ley | E ly diez la droit fey; | Ne li blaunde, jeo vous defent, | Ja pur or ne
pur argent, | Mes ly diez la droit verité, | Que puy après vous sache gré.

(If you become a wise man, of this you advise yourself well: if you must counsel anyone who has great need for you, counsel them according to the law and loyally tell them the right; do not flatter them, I forbid you, never for gold nor for silver, but tell them the right truth that then he will be grateful to you.)⁶²

59 The *History of the Persian Wars* by Herodotus was unknown to the Middle Ages except via the mediation of Orosius; the wars and their two opposing kings found their way into a number of Latin and vernacular texts, where they served as exempla. The Middle High German *Kaiserchronik*, approximately contemporary with the *Tugendspiegel*, also uses Xerxes as an example of bad kingship. For later medieval examples, see Macgregor, 'Transmedialising the Past', pp. 93–142.

60 Wernher von Elmendorf, *Tugendspiegel*, ed. by Bumke, ll. 229–34.

61 'Bi dem rîchen manne sol | ein herre suochen wer im wol | künne râten, daz ist quot: | ez ist sin, swer ez tuot', Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 13129–32; Giles of Rome, *De Regimine principum*, I, 2. 8, 1. 4. 5, 2. 3. 18, 3. 2. 4, 3. 2. 17–19.

62 Earlier *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 181–90.

Texts addressing the lords themselves remind them that it is ultimately their own responsibility to judge the counsel they have received. The *Doctrinal* reminds the high nobility:

Puis ke li haus hom set par son sens bien ouvrer | Et que si consilier
ne sevent mieus loër | Ne doit son bon conseil pour autrui sens muër |
Se on ne le puet fair a millour acorder | Car autrui sens voit on trop
souvent acater. | Ce ne vos di je mie ne ne doi tescmognier | C'on ne
doie bien croire son sage consellier, | Mais cil qui par son sens se set
bien avoier | Ne doit pour autrui sens son bon conseil cangier | Se on
ne le puet faire a mellor apoier.

(Provided that the noble man knows how to act well by his good sense and and that also his counsellors do not know how to praise him more, he must not change his good counsel for another's judgement, if he cannot reconcile it with a better one, because another's judgement will too often cost dearly. Neither do I tell you, nor do I have to testify, that one must not believe his wise counsellor, but to whom he knows by his good sense to be well guided. He must for no one else's judgment change his good counsel if he cannot make it agree with a better one.)⁶³

Such advice returns the agency but also the responsibility to the lords, who cannot justify their poor decisions by bad counsel. It is their task to choose loyal advisors and judge the counsel received. The good judgement necessary for this is acquired by learning and provides the grounds on which authors of didactic literature and mirrors of princes claim the right to instruct their lords.

The *Moralium dogma philosophorum* and its vernacular adaptation call the bad advisor *falsus amicus* and warn against their flattery: 'Sed falsi amici pro consilio adulationem afferunt et una eorum (est) contentio, quis blandissime fallat' (But false friends offer flattery instead of advice and one of them is contention, which seductively deceives).⁶⁴ This ties the discourses on mutual correction and the care of friends for each other's honour closely to the question of good counsel. The classical ideal of friendship — that mutual correction increases the honour of both parties — finds its counterpart in the flattery of the false advisor. Flattery may gain someone personal advantage but endangers the functioning of the courtly society and may lead to great problems. Instead, if a man were to build a reputation of offering good counsel, regardless of any advantages it might bring to him, he would ideally rise in the estimation of his lord (though writers acknowledged that not every lord was wise enough to appreciate honest

⁶³ *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, st. XLV–XLVI.

⁶⁴ *Das Moraliū Dogma Philosophorum*, ed. by Holmberg, p. 9.

advice). If the didactic texts addressing courtiers (rather than princes) try to teach good advice, free of self-interest, this is also empowering the ranks of the courtiers: while it diverts the responsibility for bad decisions away from the lord and towards the advisors, it also emphasizes the role they play in ensuring the honour of the lord, the court, and the domain. At the same time, it advertises a career path that will satisfy the courtier's desire to gain recognition while serving the courtly community in the best way. By thus empowering the advisors and according them responsibility, authors attempted to suppress the often-criticized courtly practice of flattery.⁶⁵ Even in the eyes of the authors who seemingly write in defence of the king's absolute power, the importance of advisors reminds us that the hierarchies were not always entirely clear-cut. This is particularly true if advice was issued by clerics, who were not only in a position to educate the secular lord but were required to do so.⁶⁶ However, as we have seen, even a lowly courtier could rise to power by advising their lord, who for his part had, to a certain degree, to depend on the courtier's good intentions.

The Court as a Communicative System

What could and should be learned at court were virtue and good conduct, and supposedly the one was closely tied to the other. On the one hand, it was assumed that good conduct reflected inner virtue; on the other, some writers suggested that virtue was also a habit that grew stronger with frequent practice. Much of what was considered good conduct can be analysed as 'courtly communication'. The language of the court did not consist solely of words. It was a complex system of signs, ranging from dress and gestures to a person's position in a room and the order in which things were done, which was interpreted by contemporaries and allowed them to draw conclusions about rank and relationships, but also personality and virtue. Such symbolic communication played an important role both in stabilizing and also in negotiating courtly hierarchies. Jean-Marie Moeglin has found that the very notion of rank was founded on the order in which nobles were placed in the courtly space at official events such as assemblies and feasts.⁶⁷ The importance of the spatial arrangement of political actors can be deduced from the outrage sparked by a (perceived)

65 Thomasin von Zerclaere, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell: ll. 13145–48: 'swer nâch sins herren willen giht, | der rætet harte selten iht. | swer rætet nâch boeses herren muot, | der stœzet in in der helle gluot' (Who would advise according to the will of his lord should rather advise seldomly. Who advises according to the mood of a bad lord pushes him in the embers of hell).

66 Weiler, 'Clerical admonitio'; Schreiner, "Correctio principis", p. 208; cf. also the discussion of the roles in teaching provided in Chapter 2.

67 Moeglin, 'L'ordre du renc', p. 172.

breach of protocol, and decades after such an event nobles still knew where their ancestors had been placed.⁶⁸ Smaller signs could convey complex messages to the contemporary observer. Chroniclers recorded at length the dress of participants, the order in which they appeared, who was greeted in which fashion by whom, and which colours were worn on occasions in which nobles came together.⁶⁹

Medievalists have dedicated much attention to certain aspects of communication in a courtly context. The works of Gerd Althoff initiated the interest in symbolic communication (i.e. any communication that relies on signs, be it gestures, clothes, colours, or proximity and distance). Althoff has shown that medieval societies relied on complex ritualistic acts in certain fields of political communication, which served to stage the relationship between its primary actors and performed the political decisions that were negotiated ahead of the act that represented them for a wider public. These rituals were complex, condensed forms of symbolic communication that implied a change of status of the participants. Althoff has also emphasized that these rituals were by no means meaningless successions of handed-down gestures but consciously created, adapted, and employed for a variety of aims — just as Certeau has argued for the process of the appropriation of rituals in everyday life.⁷⁰ Althoff has described exemplary behaviour for a range of standard political situations, such as the request and the subjugation. Others have analysed the potential of symbolic communication to consolidate authority, integrate subjects into a system of power, and enforce a sense of identity, such as we might see in the case of festive ceremonies — the ‘performativity’ of medieval political culture.⁷¹ Scholars have generally agreed that symbolic communication served to fortify and stabilize social hierarchies and provided a means to avoid dissent. The same symbolic potential could be attributed to spoken words: who could speak to whom, and in what way, indicated rank and revealed the relationships between people.

68 Goetz, ‘Der “rechte” Sitz’, p. 27.

69 Witthöft, *Ritual und Text*, p. 17.

70 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Cf. Althoff, *Spielregeln*, Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale*, and many more. For the potential use of ritual in conflicts, see for example Althoff, ‘Provozierendes Verhalten in Herrschaftsritualen des Mittelalters’. The most important notions of Althoff’s work and related German scholarship are made available in English in his collection *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, ed. by Althoff, Fried, and Geary, particularly Althoff, ‘The Variability of Rituals in the Middle Ages’, pp. 71–88.

71 Cf. Gunn, *The Court as a Stage*, and Weiler, *Kingship*, esp. chapter 8: ‘Addressing the Public: Rituals, Gestures and Charters’, pp. 130–50. On the origins of ‘performativity’ in theatre studies and anthropology and its application in historical research, cf. Martschukat and Patzold, *Geschichtswissenschaft und ‘Performative Turn’*. A recent discussion of the varying notions of performativity and their potential as categories for analysis was provided by Oschema, ‘“Dass” und “wie”’, pp. 9–32.

On the other hand, little attention has been paid to the rules of communication in everyday life.⁷² Rules of communication were relevant for almost any encounter between groups and individuals at court. In these interactions, symbolic communication was also used to express capability, loyalties, and virtues. Certain behaviours were seen as indicative of particular personal characteristics such as steadfastness and wisdom (in a knight or courtier), or chastity and obedience (in a lady).

In the following section, I argue that the regulation of interactions between courtiers and between courtier and lord served to approach the courtly ideal of a joyful, well-ordered community. The rules of communication reveal that authors were aware that the court and its members frequently fell short of this ideal and that regulation was considered necessary in order that people would come to behave in the appropriate manner naturally. Such regulation was meant to harmonize the ideal and the reality.

Communicating Rank

Advice on how to communicate in a courtly setting varied depending on the audience it targeted. Authors who address young courtiers make it their aim to teach them to navigate the muddy waters of courtly society. They warn against slander and gossip and offer solutions for the typical difficulties that might arise. They advise on how to build a reputation and how to fend off the envy that might result from it. Texts that include teachings specifically for lords and those in power encourage eloquence and rhetorical skills, the better to lead the community toward the common good.

The complex image of the court as both a potentially ennobling community and a social threat is mirrored in the rules of interaction that apply in courtly contexts. If we apply a wider definition of the court, taking it as a 'social and political body, focused on the prince but incorporating much of the elite of any given polity [...]; an occasion',⁷³ we can even say that these interactions *are* the court. The people who convene around a prince, fulfil functions in the administration of his power, give advice, or simply stay present in the hope of gaining benefits from their proximity to the prince all contribute to the complex social construct that constitutes the court, and they all have a place in its complex hierarchy — a place they might

⁷² Althoff himself has discussed the role of jesting in the hall as a means of establishing relationships, criticizing the powerful in an accepted framework, and creating community: Althoff, 'Zur Bedeutung symbolischer Kommunikation', pp. 379–81. See also Bohler, 'Civilités langagières', p. 117, who concludes that language, though dangerous and in need of taming, could create community and courtly spirit.

⁷³ Gunn and Janse, 'Introduction: New Histories of the Court', p. 2.

strive to improve.⁷⁴ With all the individual interests present, all interactions can potentially cause offence, provoke conflict, and thus disrupt the order. Without regulating these interactions, the court ceases to function.

In medieval romances we encounter fictional examples of the great damage that can be caused by miscommunication, due either to ignorance of the rules or conscious non-compliance.⁷⁵ But chroniclers, too, report instances of great offence that could be caused by a simple breach of etiquette like someone taking the wrong place at the table.⁷⁶ This is because such mistakes were in reality anything but simple and, if they made it into chronicles, probably not unconscious either. The place at a table, a greeting given or denied, a stirrup held, or a glass of wine passed communicated to courtly society information about the social hierarchy and could confirm or challenge it. At the highest level of society, a breach of etiquette could provoke war, but even for a simple courtier, knowing the rules, obeying them, and using them for their own benefit, if possible, could make the difference between patronage and dismissal. For women, the stakes were even higher and concerned their personal integrity as well as their family's honour.

Mistrust of the spoken word was strong. Advice on good conduct therefore aimed to prevent grave mishaps and the conflicts that could rise from them. However, in order to use language appropriately in a courtly environment, it was not enough to avoid errors but also to conform to the courtly ideal. Language was supposed to contribute to the joyous atmosphere and communicate the virtue of the individual speaker. These major functions became more or less relevant depending on the status of the individual speaker and their function within the cosmos that was courtly society. Thus communication included not just the use of words but a range of performative actions that constituted a vital part in the courtly communicative system.

Specific rules on courtly communication are most frequently addressed to young people at the courts, especially to those unfamiliar with the courtly environment. The most important lesson they had to learn was to refrain from speaking rashly, without duly considering the situation and their own position. The naive impetus to speak one's mind was, by didactic authors all across north-western Europe, regarded as boorish and uncivilized. '[Z]e rechte swic, ze staten sprich' (Be silent at the right

74 Vale, *The Princely Court*, p. 28 distinguished between the court as the extended household and the court as an assembly of the nobles before the king, which is 'essentially an occasion'.

75 Examples include Chrétien de Troye's *Perceval*, whose misunderstanding of the rules of courtly communication delays the rescue of the Fisher King, or the misinterpretation in the *Nibelungenlied* of Siegfried's rank as he holds Gunther's stirrups upon their arrival at the Burgundian court.

76 Goetz, 'Der "rechte" Sitz', p. 30.

time and speak up when necessary), *Der Winsbecke* advises his son.⁷⁷ The same restraint was necessary in one's bodily expressions. It has been observed that one cannot *not* communicate,⁷⁸ therefore posture, gestures, glances, and dress also needed restraint and schooling. The earlier *Urbain le Courtois*, addressing the page's service at the table, forbids him to lean against a pillar or scratch his skin when instructing on the most basic forms of self-control necessary in the courtly public space (ll. 39–49).⁷⁹ Such expressions elicited interpretations from other people and novice courtiers needed to be trained to communicate the right things. Rules differed for youths, females, and established courtiers, though some general norms applied to all. In general, the lower the rank, the less expression was deemed appropriate and the less a person should be perceptible to others. The right to communicate actively was connected to status; reticence was a matter of propriety for those without power. Young people were generally encouraged to listen rather than speak, a rule that applied even more to young women. The didactic texts themselves typically include formulaic requests that their audience may listen.⁸⁰ In order to learn the right way to communicate, the audience must observe and be taught before they should contribute in any way themselves. We know this very same advice was given to novices in monasteries.⁸¹ As imitation was central to the education at court, abstinence from communication allowed young people to learn the ropes. Moreover, it also prevented them from uttering anything that could be perceived as foolish.⁸² Lacking courtly eloquence, they would not be able to judge if their words were suitable to the situation and they could thus harm their own reputations. The capacity to speak in ac-

77 *Der Winsbecke*, in 'Winsbecke, Winsbeckin, and Winsbecke-Parodies', ed. and trans. Rasmussen and Trokhimenko, st. 23, 5.

78 On the paradoxical communication by silence, cf. Hahn, 'Schweigen als Kommunikation'; for the ambivalent medieval discourse on silence in a monastic context, see Giraud, 'Writing about Silence'.

79 Advice the *Urbain* copied from the *Liber Urbani*, ll. 1312–13: 'coram magnificis manifeste scalpere nolis | torquendo digitos nares nec cetera membra' (It is best not to openly scratch your nose or limbs in the presence of the great by crooking your fingers.), *Urbanus Magnus Danielis Becclesiensis*, ed. by Smyly, trans. by David Crouch. I am indebted to David Crouch who made his translation of the text available to me.

80 In the earlier *Urbain le Courtois*: 'Beau fist, ore escotez' (l. 7), 'Ore escotez, mon beau douce fiz' (l. 13), 'ore escotet, moun douce enfant' (l. 24) etc; similar expressions appear in the later version. The formula is well known e.g. from the *Ecclesiastes*.

81 For example, Hugh of Saint Victor in his *De institutione novitiorum* emphasizes that the novice needs to learn 'quando tacendum et quando loquendum'; p. 87 (ed. by Feiss, Sicard, and Poiré).

82 The version of the earlier *Urbain le Courtois* in MS Cambridge University Library, Gg 1.1. recommends: 'A autri table ne parlez trop | Qe tu non soiez tenu pur sot' (At another's table do not talk too much so that you will not be considered foolish); ll. 175–76.

cordance with the situation was the epitome of courtliness and eloquence and needed to be learned by observation.⁸³

Abstinence from speaking was not just recommended to avoid mishaps but also to comply with the limitations of one's social standing. This becomes clear if we consider that the very same group — young boys and girls — is also the one instructed to restrain their movements and gaze. Gestures, too, could offend. Moreover, a person who speaks and gestures takes up more social space than one who remains silent; thus, vivid gestures could be regarded as offensive, especially in young people and women:

ein juncherr und ein riter sol | hie an sich ouch behüeten wol, | daz
er sîn hende habe still, | swenner iht sprechen wil. | er sol swingen
niht sîn hende | wider eins vrumen mannes zende. | swer der zuht wol
geloubet, | der sol setzn ûf niemens houbet | sîn hant, der tiuwerr sî dan
er, | noch ûf sîn ahsel, daz ist êr.

(A young nobleman and a knight shall take care to keep their hands still when he wants to say something. He should not wave his hands against a good man's teeth. Whoever believes in discipline should not put his hand on anyone's head who is more esteemed than him, nor on his shoulder, this is honourable.)⁸⁴

Gestures have the potential to undermine hierarchical relations. A hand placed on someone's head was perhaps regarded as belittling, while a hand on a shoulder could be regarded as mitigating differences in rank.

The gaze was another bodily expression that needed to be tamed. Together with a woman's breasts and lips, her eyes were among the attributes that needed to be controlled the most, according to Robert de Blois. The same three body parts were also given special attention by Robert in his advice on female beauty, as they were the most likely to seduce.⁸⁵ The taming of the female gaze belongs in the same category as the restraint in bodily expression and rules for dress. *Der Welsche Gast* advises:

ein vrouwe sol niht vast an sehen | einn vrömeden man, daz stât wol. |
ein edel juncherre sol | bêde riter unde vrouwen | gezogenliche gerne

83 Cicero and other classical authors emphasize the skill of adapting one's language to the situation, audience, or interlocutors; cf. Schnell, 'Gastmahl und Gespräch'. This rule is repeated in several medieval texts on communication; see Bohler, 'Civilités langagières', and in the *Liber Urbani*.

84 Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 441–50. Similar advice is given in the Latin schoolbook called *Facetus*, no. 154: 'Ille placet, quicumque tacet maiore loquente; stultus erit, qui protulerit sua verba repente' (Anyone pleases by keeping still when a superior speaks; a fool offers his words suddenly); trans. by Johnston, 'Ciceronian Rhetoric and Ethics', p. 153.

85 Udry, 'Robert de Blois and Geoffroy de la Tour Landry on Feminine Beauty', p. 92.

schouwen. | Ein juncvrouwe sol senftliclich | und niht lût sprechen
sicherlich. | ein juncherre sol sin sô gereit | daz er vernem swaz man im
seit, | sô daz ez undurft si | daz man im sage aver wi. | zuht wert den
vrouwen alln gemein | sitzen mit bein über bein.

(It befits a lady not to look boldly at an unknown man. A noble young man may well gaze at both knights and ladies in a mannered way. A young lady must surely speak softly and not loudly. A young man must be so alert that he listens to what is said to him, so that it would not be necessary that he must be told again. Decency denies it that ladies sit with their legs crossed.)⁸⁶

Language, gesture, gaze, and dress belong to the same communicative system and its rules establish that the lower the status, the less a person should strive to draw attention to themselves. Women in particular should not flaunt their bodies.⁸⁷ They cannot walk too assertively or look at men directly, as this would communicate a lack of submission. A direct gaze is perceived as provocative, both in sexual terms and as a sign of self-assertion.⁸⁸ There is a place and time for the female gaze, for example the tournament, where it serves the male desire to boast and display their prowess.⁸⁹

Young men at court, too, were advised to measure their gaze and look at people with discretion. This indicates that the lower a person was placed in the social order of courtly society, the more passive they were meant to be: spoken to and looked at, rather than actively drawing attention to themselves. Thus *Der Welsche Gast* advises young ladies not to speak unless asked to, and then to speak very little.⁹⁰

86 Thomasin von Zerklære, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 400–12.

87 Though there are rules of modesty for men, too: ‘zuht wert den rîtern alln gemein daz si niht dicke schowen ir bein’ (Decency prohibits that knights in general should often show their leg); Thomasin von Zerklære, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 433–34.

88 See also: ‘ein vrowe sol recken niht ir hant, swenn si rît, vür ir gewant; si sol ir ougen und ir houbet | stille haben, daz geloubet’ (a lady should not frequently stretch her hand out of her cloak when riding; she should hold her eyes and head still, believe it) and ‘ein vrouwe sol niht hinder sich | dicke sehen, dunket mich. | si sol gën vür sich geriht | und sol vil umbe sehen niht; | gedenke an ir zuht über al, | ob si gehœre deheinen schal’ (a lady should not frequently look behind herself, it seems to me. She should walk looking ahead and not turn around often; she should think of her discipline everywhere, as if she hears no noise); Thomasin von Zerklære, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 449–54.

89 L’Estrange, ‘Gazing at Gawain’, pp. 77–79.

90 ‘[E]in juncvrouwe sol selten iht | sprechen, ob mans vrâget niht. | ein vrowe sol ouch niht sprechen vil, | ob si mir gelouben wil’ (a young lady should rarely say anything if not asked. Also a lady should not speak much, if she believed me); Thomasin von Zerklære, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 465–70.

In order to communicate that one knew and accepted one's position, it was equally unsuitable to refrain from all communication; in some cases, the person of lower status in the hierarchy had to initiate an exchange, such as in the case of greetings. Greetings were indicative of the social hierarchy: the lower-ranking person was to be first to acknowledge his betters, in a polite and pleasant manner.⁹¹ This, just like all the other rules that aimed to regulate communications, served to mark their place in the courtly cosmos, showing their acceptance of the status quo, avoiding conflict. *Diu Winsbeckin*, addressing a young girl, advises its audience to prettily greet everyone they meet. Robert de Blois advises that women do not speak much, but they must also not remain too silent as nothing would impair their reputation so much as not knowing how to greet other people.⁹² It may seem that the obligation to greet was specific to gender, however it was also tied to rank: we find the same advice given to the page in *Urbain le Courtois*, which recommends that the young boy at court greets everyone in order to prevent offence.⁹³ In greeting nicely, women and young courtiers communicate to courtly society that they are humble and respect their inferior station, but actively participate in the courtly, polite community. The necessity to communicate this applied to women of any rank, whereas it was limited to the lower ranks of male courtiers.

We see clearly that communication is specific to power. Given the potential of language to cause complications, silence was the safest option for those who were only just gaining their place in courtly society. It is indicative of this relative status that rules for noblewomen are essentially the same as those for a simple page with no influence at court. The relationship between language and power goes both ways: women wielded little power and had therefore had little reason to speak and should take up little room in the courtly cosmos. But language was also perilous, so people of little power — women and courtiers at the bottom of the hierarchy — were better advised to refrain from speaking unless it was necessary to avoid conflict.⁹⁴

The differences in ideal communication that depended on relative status are made visible in an unparalleled way in the two versions of *Urbain*

91 Fuhrmann, "Willkommen und Abschied", pp. 111–39.

92 'Por ce doit estre amesuree | Chascune dame de parler, | Qu'aie ne s'an face blamer. | Et d'autre part li trop taiser | Ne revient pas molt a plisir, | Car molt an fait moins a prisier, | Qui ne set les genz araisnier' (Therefore, each lady must be measured in her speaking so that she won't be blamed for it. On the other hand, there does not come much pleasure from being too silent since nothing impairs praise as much as not to knowing how to greet people). *Chastoiement des Dames*, ed. by Fox, ll. 20–26.

93 Earlier *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 86–88: 'Et vos encountrez petit ou grant | Toste ta bouche overez | Et belement li saluez' (And if you encounter high or low, to all open your mouth and greet them prettily).

94 Ruhe, 'Diskrektion, Ehre und Alltagsmoral', pp. 135–56.

le Courtois. The older version targets a young boy unfamiliar with the court, whereas the later version addresses a man who has already made a name for himself. The differences become clear not just in the different services that they are expected to perform, but also in the way they are supposed to speak. Boys newly arrived at court were likely among the lowest-ranking members of courtly society, and their task was to learn to fit in, cause no offence, and communicate their virtue and capability. In order to appear educated (*nouriz*), he needed to learn to appear full of sweetness, elegant and courtly (*pleyn de douçour*, [...] *deboneir et courteise*), and the first step to achieving this was to learn to speak French, ‘Car molt est langage alosé | De gentil home et mout amé’ (because it is the most esteemed language and most loved by noblemen).⁹⁵ This provides some indication about the background of the boy who was supposed to receive such advice: he would have grown up away from the prestigious courts and high society, since he spoke English at home, and he would not have been to school, as instruction in English grammar schools was through the medium of French. The later *Urbain le Courtois* does not include this advice at this point — the experienced courtier would already have learned French.⁹⁶ Thomasin von Zerclaere enjoys the use of French words in courtly language (*strîfeln*, ll. 39–46), while other authors discourage this fashion.⁹⁷ Nor was it only French that needed to be learned at the court, but also polite language:

De langage apernez, | Que entendre le savez | Et parler apertement, |
Come a nuture apent. | Si langage ne savez | Ne apprendre ne volez, |
L'em porra parler de vous | Grant male et deshonzours.

(Learn the language so that you can understand and speak it publicly, as befits good manners. If you do not know the language nor want to learn it, they are going to say bad and dishonourable things about you.)⁹⁸

The language of the court needed to be learned, just like a foreign language, both in order to understand it and in order to use it *apertement* — publicly. Thomasin confirms:

swîgent man daz lernen sol | daz man dar nâch wil sprechen wol. | swer
swîgent niht lernen wil, | der spricht unnützer dinge vil. | man sol daz
zieren heimlichen | daz man wil sprechen offenlichen.

95 Earlier *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 19–20.

96 Manuscript Cambridge, Trinity Coll. Cam. O.1.17, dating from the fourteenth century, interpolates this rule, though much later in the poem; Parsons, *Anglo-Norman Books of Courtesy*, p. 7.

97 Miedema, ‘Gesprächsnormen’, pp. 254–55.

98 Earlier *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 69–76.

(This should be learnt in silence so that afterwards one can speak well. Who does not want to learn in silence speaks many useless things. One should polish in secret what one wants to say in public.)⁹⁹

The language of the court should be learned in silence. Without the knowledge of courtly language, one cannot participate in the courtly society. Failure to learn it results in loss of honour, which is the highest currency in polite circles. Even the lowest-ranking courtier needed to be able to speak appropriately sometimes. A young courtier who fails to greet one's betters appropriately and remains *coy* (quiet) might be reproached as *dedeignours* (arrogant). However, similar care was needed to avoid answering out of turn.¹⁰⁰ If the safest way is to speak only when one is specifically required to, the mastery of eloquent language becomes a prerequisite if a person aims to improve their social standing. Knowing when not speak is the minimum requirement, but knowing when to speak and how to speak elegantly characterizes the refined person and quickly becomes a marker of courtliness. The later *Urbain le Courtois*, addressing an advanced courtier, accordingly takes a different focus:

Gardez ta lange sagement. | Si vous avez acheson | De moustrer avuant
vostre reson, | Curteys et brief soit tun lange; | Le meuch serrez oy de
le sage. | Et quant vous voillez parlere | Et vostre resoun demoustrere, |
ou si vous soiez aresonee | De jeune home ou de eyné, | L'entendez
bien, ne soiez hastfis | Et quant sont passez touz lour disse, | En my
le frount les regardez. | Vous peez ne voz meyns ne crouellez, | Mes
sagement et sanz mesdist | Repounez a tout lour dist.

(Guard your tongue wisely. If you have an occasion to display your good understanding, your language should be courtly and brief; the more you will be heard by the wise. And if you want to speak and show forth your good sense, or if you are addressed by a young or old man, hear them out, do not be hasty, and when their words are all spoken, look at them squarely. You must not move your feet or hands around, but respond wisely to all their words and without speaking out of order.)¹⁰¹

The more experienced courtier may use his grasp of courtly language to show himself in a good light. Otherwise, he is encouraged only to speak when addressed. Even to him, conversation is a tricky situation:

⁹⁹ Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 585–90.

¹⁰⁰ Earlier *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 89–92 and 107–08.

¹⁰¹ Later *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 32–46. These rules are probably taken from the *Facetus*, which offers much the same advice (nrs. 88 and 154).

interruptions and a look that might be interpreted as bold may cause offence; gestures — like all bodily expressions — need to be measured and controlled. Uncontrolled utterances such as laughing and swearing could undermine the courtier's credibility: the more you swear, the less you are believed, says the *Urbain le Courtois*.¹⁰² Speaking elegantly as a way of self-promotion is paired with a warning against slander and quarrelling. Only if one is capable of using courtly language for oneself, without threatening social harmony, will a courtier be 'plus duté et pur sage alosee' (more respected and esteemed as a wise man).¹⁰³

Rules for speech were phrased much more explicitly and tailored for specific occasions depending on whether the audience was composed of those lower on the social ladder, knights, or courtiers.¹⁰⁴ Advice addressed to princes mostly emphasizes the importance to *parler sagement* (*Doctrinal Sauvage*, XLVII, l. 262). Written guidelines were needed predominantly for those members of courtly society who did not grow up in the courtly cosmos ruled by these conventions. However, rules for communication addressed to princes did exist, for instance in the Norwegian *Speculum Regale*, which contains several chapters on communication among the high nobility, such as how to address the king.¹⁰⁵ The king and the high nobility were expected to know well how to speak to their subjects and many a chronicler has lauded a prince for his eloquence. Eloquence became synonymous with wisdom and learning and thus part of the ideal of kingship — and by extension, nobility — from the twelfth century.¹⁰⁶ The more kings were expected to be learned, the more they were also expected to be able to address the public in rhetorical speeches. Elegant speech also served to distinguish kings and princes from their subjects. The *Secretum secretorum*, read across Europe throughout the high and late Middle Ages as a mirror of princes, advises the great king Alexander how to speak in the context of his advice on public appearance:

¹⁰² Later *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons: 'E quant vous vodretz beau parler, | Parlez saunz rire et saunz jurer. [...] Cum plus juretz, le meins vous crei' (And if you wish to speak prettily, speak without laughter and swearing. [...] Because the more you swear the less you are believed); ll. 294–95 and 303.

¹⁰³ Later *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, l. 140.

¹⁰⁴ Interestingly, we find many parallels in the rules for novices at the same time, who also needed to learn the correct way to conduct themselves and communicate in a new context; cf. the discussion of the use of language and gestures in Hugh of Saint Victor's *De institutione novitiorum* in Falque, 'Le geste et la parole chez Hugues de Saint-Victor', 383–412.

¹⁰⁵ *The King's Mirror* (*Speculum regale – Konungs Skuggsjá*), trans. by Larson, chs 31–34, 40–41, pp. 184–93, 226–34.

¹⁰⁶ Aurell, 'The Knowledge of Knights and Power of Kings', pp. 18 and 24. Already Charlemagne was lauded by his biographer, Einhard, for his eloquence in Latin, though he had never learned to read or write it. Einhard, *Vita Caroli Magni*, ed. by Firchow and Zeydel, ch. 24.

Multo convenit regie dignitati honorifice indui, et semper cum pulcro apparatu, et excellere alios in decore. Uti ergo debet caris pulcris et extraneis ornamentis. Decens est siquidem in quadam prerogativa alios omnes superare ut per hec dignitas regis decoretur, potencia non ledatur, et debita reverencia tribuatur. Decet eciam regem esse facundum, affabilem, claram voce habere, que multum prodest tempore preliorum ad exhortandum exercitum et exercitandum.

(Much does it befit the royal dignity to dress respectfully, and always with a noble appearance, and to exceed others in elegance. Therefore, he must use costly, fair, and foreign ornaments. It is decent accordingly in a certain prerogative that you advise others to excel so that the dignity of the king is honoured by these, the power not offended and due reverence paid. It befits also the king to be eloquent, affable, and to have a clear voice, which is of great benefit in time of battles to encourage and exercise the army.)¹⁰⁷

The king should not speak too much, so that his words will carry more authority:

O Alexander, quam speciosum est et honorificum in rege abstinere se a multiloquio, nisi necessitas hoc deposcat. Melius enim est quod aures hominum sint semper sitibunde d regis eloquia quam suis affatibus sacientur, quia saturatis auribus anima saturatur, et tunc non multum libenter audiunt regem saturantem.

(Oh Alexander, how beautiful and honourable it is in a king to abstain from loquaciousness, unless necessity demands it. Indeed, it is better that the ears of the people are always thirsty for the king's speech than to be satiated of his words, because the mind is saturated by saturated ears, and they hear with not much pleasure the king who saturates them.)¹⁰⁸

Loquaciousness, regarded as the opposite of *parler sagement*, was discouraged for all nobility, from courtier to king. In the case of the latter, however, it would make the king appear too social with his subjects. As pretty conversation was a way to appear pleasant in a courtly context, it was not deemed appropriate for a king. His words had to carry greater authority, so they should not be used for any unnecessary chatter. Again, language is used to demarcate the social spheres that converge in any political setting — its use is as symbolic of rank and status as dress and manner in a courtly setting.

¹⁰⁷ *Secretum secretorum*, ed. by Steele, p. 48.

¹⁰⁸ *Secretum secretorum*, ed. by Steele, p. 49.

Even for kings and princes, it was important to know how to speak well, less to appear pleasant but rather to convince and offer counsel. To *parler sagement* meant not only knowing what to say but also how to say it. The connection between wisdom and learning that was necessary in a statesman in order to pursue the common good had originally been purported by Cicero and in the high Middle Ages this featured prominently in the works of political theorists like Thierry of Chartres, Brunetto Latini, John of Paris, and Marsilius of Padua.¹⁰⁹ Brunetto Latini, in his *Livres dou Trésor*, dedicates the entire third part to rhetoric as the art of government. Latini shares Aristotle's reservations about rhetoric and concedes that the art of *ben parler* has caused damage when it was not paired with virtue. This is why in his *Trésor*, ethics — as the art of governing the self — precedes rhetoric, the art of government.

Après ce que maistres Brunet Latin ot complie la seconde partie de son livre, en quoi il demostre assez bonement coment home doit estre en moralité, et coment il doit vivre honestement et gouverner soiet sa mesnee et ses chose selonc la science de etique [...] il li fut avis un que tout ce estoit une euvre coupee se il ne deist de la tierce science, ce est politique, qui enseigne coment home doit governern la cité, car citez n'est autre chose que une genz assemblees por vivre a une loi et a une gouverneur. Tullies dit que la plus haute science de cité gouverner si est rhetorique, ce est a dire la science dou parler...

(After master Brunetto Latini has completed the second part of his book, in which he shows well how man must be moral and how he must live honourably and know how to govern himself, his household, and his things according to the science of ethics [...] he believed that all this work would be incomplete if it did not speak the third science, which is politics, which teaches how man should govern the city, because cities are nothing but an people assembled to live under one law and one governor. Tullius says that the highest science of governing the city is rhetoric, that is the science of speaking eloquently...)¹¹⁰

To Latini, it is the task of the orator to counsel the city — to convince them, but also knowing what is good for them.¹¹¹ In the figure of the orator, the archetype of the 'good counsellor', who advises in the best interest of the listener, is enhanced by skilled language and becomes the good ruler, who speaks in the interest of the community and pursues the common good. Other Italian philosophers, such as Albertanus of

109 Nederman, 'The Union of Wisdom and Eloquence', pp. 75–79.

110 Brunetto Latini, *Trésor*, ed. by Beltrami and others, III. 1–2, p. 634.

111 Nederman, 'The Union of Wisdom and Eloquence', p. 88.

Brescia or Francesco Barberini, agree with the importance of oratory in the political practice. Their emphasis on the role of rhetoric was surely related to the continuation of Roman public leadership and its transmission in the works of classical authors, above all Cicero. However, public speaking was not only a necessary skill in the urban environment of northern Italy. In the courtly societies north of the Alps, too, there were numerous occasions for the princes and kings to shine through eloquence; however, the rules transmitted in this region were much less focused on rhetorical skill in the strict sense but closely connected to virtue and good conduct with elegant speech. Radulphus Brito, writing in late thirteenth-century Paris, recommended *rhetorica usualis* (customary rhetoric) to the ruler and, by this he meant elegant expression.¹¹² The king had to use language in a way that captivated the nobility. Eloquence was the tool with which to establish relationships and community, and as such it was just as much part of the practice of politics north of the Alps as *deliberatio* was in the urban political sphere in the south of Europe. At the French royal court especially, speaking well distinguished the king as learned and virtuous, two aspects of royal self-fashioning that had been extremely important since Louis IX.¹¹³ Thus it is in the context of the curriculum of arts and sciences and the instruction in good manners, both based on Hugh of St Victor's *De institutione novitiorum*, that Vincent of Beauvais recommends noble sons to learn how to speak well.¹¹⁴ They should also learn to argue well, with moderation and without anger, but not delve into the more complex questions.¹¹⁵ It is not the technical skill of rhetoric that Vincent exhorts them to learn, but the art of using language to communicate not only meaning but elegance, virtue, and learning, the cornerstones of nobility in the eyes of high medieval moralists. In a political sphere in which much political power depended on social connection and cultural capital, mastering the art of *ben parler* was central.

Creating the Courtly Community

Courtly conduct consists largely of presenting oneself in a pleasant light, interacting in a way that does not threaten social hierarchies, and acknowledging that this requires a degree of pretence. Ideally, good conduct and well-chosen words should indicate inner virtue, but authors were well aware that this was not always the case. To the critical mind of Thomasin, a major problem of the court is the dissonance between appearance and reality, and this opinion is mirrored in the rules he sets for use of language.

¹¹² Johnston, 'Ciceronian Rhetoric and Ethics', p. 156.

¹¹³ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 49.

¹¹⁴ Steiner, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, p. xiv.

¹¹⁵ Johnston, 'Ciceronian Rhetoric and Ethics', p. 157.

The potential of language for make-believe, presenting as true that which is not, is of particular concern to him, so Thomasin's conversation rules focus on boasting on the one hand, and lying on the other.¹¹⁶ Speaking in a courtly manner does not just express and confirm hierarchy, and thus limit the potential for dissent and controversy, it also brings the court closer to fulfilling its potential as a joyful community of virtue that would justify its place in the social order of the world and make it a model for human society as a whole.

If we summarize the advice given in conduct literature at the time, we find that a large body of precepts are concerned with regulating behaviour in a way that made a person appear pleasant and distinguished. The earlier *Urbain le Courtois* gives as a first rule, 'Je voile tot a de primoure | que tu seez sages et pleyn de douçour; | seez deboneir et curteise' (I wish first of all that you be wise and full of sweetness; be humble and courtly).¹¹⁷ In *Diu Winsbeckin*, the girl asks to be taught 'nach eren leben, gebaren, unde sprechen ebben, daz ich den wisen wol behage' (how to live honourably and how to act and speak moderately, so that I am pleasing to wise people).¹¹⁸ At the courts, the necessity to control oneself in order to appear pleasant was so dominant that it has been regarded by some scholars as the driving force of a 'civilizing process'.¹¹⁹

The use of language was therefore an important skill to master. Speaking pleasantly ensured that one could participate in the courtly community where eloquence earned cultural capital.¹²⁰ Despite the dangers of speaking out of turn, complete silence could be regarded as offensive. The earlier *Urbain le Courtois* advises:

Et vos encountrez petit ou grant, | Toste ta bouche overez | Et
belement li saluez. | Si vous en alez coy avaunt | e ne responez
meyentaunt, | L'em vous dirra deshonzours | Et que vous estez
dedeignours, | E ke vous estez maunori.

(And when you encounter the lowly or the high, open your mouth to everyone and greet them nicely. If you remain silent against them and do not respond merrily, they will speak dishonourably about you and say that you are haughty and ill-bred.)¹²¹

¹¹⁶ See also Miedema, 'Gesprächsnormen', who quotes examples from *Der Renner*.

¹¹⁷ Earlier *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 15–16, pp. 16–17.

¹¹⁸ *Diu Winsbeckin*, in *Winsbeckische Gedichte*, ed. by Leitzmann, trans. by Rasmussen and Trokhimenko, st. 12, 4–6.

¹¹⁹ Term coined by Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*, published in English as *The Civilizing Process*, originally referring to the Renaissance courts.

¹²⁰ On the forms of capital, Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', pp. 241–58.

¹²¹ Earlier *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 86–93.

Remaining silent when the situation called for conversation was a serious breach of courtly protocol. Robert de Blois reproaches a lady who does not know how to greet people nicely as being poorly educated and ill-mannered, in a section dedicated to 'Ensoignemanz de saluer et de soi desboichier' (Lesson on greeting and opening one's mouth).¹²² A lady who refuses to speak, like one who covers up her beauty too much, does not contribute to courtly merriment, and is accordingly described as lacking *largesse*.¹²³ Bohler has found that in Robert's work, being capable of *beau parler* was important for a lady in that it created social ties, so refraining from speaking courteously could disrupt the joyous community.¹²⁴

Once again, the act of greeting serves as an example that reveals the complexities of communication that those at court, especially women, had to navigate. Ulrich von Lichtenstein, in his *Frauenbuch*, uses greetings as a peg on which to hang his caricature of symbolic communication at court and its implications for women. Ulrich is well aware of the conflicting requirements women faced in a courtly setting and he masterfully reveals the schizophrenic expectations connected to their conduct. The *Frauenbuch* uses a fictional discussion between a lady and a knight which allows Ulrich to present what he probably considered the female side of the argument. The lady initiates the discussion,¹²⁵ asking the knight why he and his peers display so little joy these days, to which the knight replies with a complaint about the lack of nice greetings knights receive from the ladies:

ir grüezet uns nu niht als e | die vrouwen grouzetten werde man. | sagt
an waz hab wir iu getan, | daz ir ouch schone grüezet uns niht? [...] |
iur deheiniu uns gütlich an siht. | iur ougen uns ouch grüezent niht,
ouch erstummet iu zestunt | beidiu zunge ouch der munt.

(You do not greet us as ladies used to greet men. Pray tell, what did we do to you that you do not greet us prettily? [...] None of you looks kindly at us. Not even their eyes greet us, and also their tongue and their mouth have become silent.)¹²⁶

He complains that knights at court have lost all their joy due to the lack of female attention, described as an absence of friendly words, smiles, and sparkling eyes. After some reciprocal accusations about the decay in courtly interaction between knights and ladies, the lady reveals another reason for the alleged change in their behaviour, which is elaborated on

122 Rubric in *Chastoiement des Dames*, ed. by Fox, p. 143. The same text opens by stating that it will teach women to be measured 'en lor taisir, en lor parler' (in their speaking and in their being silent), l. 13, in order to preserve their good reputation.

123 *Chastoiement des Dames*, ed. by Fox, ll. 87–88.

124 Bohler, 'Civilités langagières', 123.

125 On this trope, cf. Young, 'Kommentar', p. 181, cf. Glier, *Artes armandi*, p. 33.

126 Ulrich von Lichtenstein, *Das Frauenbuch*, ed. by Young, ll. 114–26.

in the remainder of the poem: 'ob iuch ein vrouwe gruozte, | den gruoze mit lachen suozte, | ir daehtet also: si ist mir holt!' (If a woman greeted you and sweetened her greeting with a smile, you would think: She fancies me!).¹²⁷ Ulrich draws attention to men's interpretation of female behaviour even more explicitly later in his *Frauenbuch*, when his lady comments on the countless restrictions on female conduct that aim above all to communicate their chastity.¹²⁸ The same men who bemoan their lack of courtly delight interpret any friendliness as a sign of the woman's promiscuity:

swelch vrouwe iuch nu gütlich an siht, | ir jehet, si hab es durch daz getan, | si welle iuch minnen vür ir man. | da von sin wir in huote | mit libe und ouch mit muote | gen iu, als uns des twinget not. | wir waeren anders an eren tot. | daz man unser vreude unreht verstat, | darumbe die vreude nu manec wip lat. | wir waeren noch vil hochgemuot | haet man die vreude von uns vür guot.

(If a lady looks kindly at you, you say that she has done it because she wants to love you instead of her husband. Therefore, we are on guard against you with body and mind, as necessity forces us. Otherwise, our honour would be dead. Since our joy is misinterpreted, many a woman leaves the joy behind her. We would much rather be in high spirits if joy would be regarded good in us.)¹²⁹

This summarizes the conflicting requirements of female communication: on the one hand, a woman's gestures and language had to communicate chastity in order to preserve her honour and that of her male guardians;¹³⁰ on the other, her place in courtly society was to spark joy and pleasure.

Ideally, however, a noblewoman knew how to walk the fine line between too much and too little. We see in the complaint of Ulrich's lady that didactic authors were well aware of the fact that these requirements could be perceived as being at odds with one another. What has been said about language and gesture also applied to dress and the flaunting of beauty. Like Ulrich's knight, Robert de Blois in the late thirteenth century also complains about excessive concealment of female beauty.¹³¹

127 Ulrich von Lichtenstein, *Das Frauenbuch*, ed. by Young, ll. 185–87.

128 Ulrich von Lichtenstein, *Das Frauenbuch*, ed. by Young, ll. 187–94. The scene is analysed by Crouch in *The Chivalric Turn*, in the context of other examples of male self-delusion, pp. 156–60.

129 Ulrich von Lichtenstein, *Das Frauenbuch*, ed. by Young, ll. 310–20.

130 Ruhe, 'Diskretion, Ehre und Alltagsmoral', p. 141.

131 *Chastoiement des Dames*, ed. by Fox, ll. 363–66, trans. by Udry, 'Robert de Blois and Geoffroy de la Tour Landry on Feminine Beauty', p. 94: 'Bele boiche, beaux denz, beaux nez Beaux eauz, cler vis pou estoupez' (A beautiful mouth, beautiful teeth, beautiful nose, beautiful eyes, clear complexion should never be veiled).

Robert delves deeply into the regulations on female beauty and criticizes women who cover their faces, seemingly unaware that it was precisely the over-regulation of female appearance that likely caused women to do so in the first place.¹³² It seems that in the course of the thirteenth century, this insurance against reproaches for the visibility of even the smallest part of the body had become rather widespread.¹³³ As women were constantly subjected to misogynistic interpretations of their words, dress, and gestures, they reacted by withdrawing from the courtly high spirits into hypermorality that surpassed that of their guardians. It even seems that, by exaggerated constraint and covering up their beauty, women rebelled against male over-interpretation of their gaze, gestures, and dress and refused to contribute to the courtly joy.¹³⁴ The resolution offered by the author-persona is accordingly not a hard and fast rule but rather depends on the willingness of both knights and ladies to play their part well:

Ich sprach: 'vroum, ich muoz des jehen, | waz ich ie vrouwen han
gesehen, | dar zuo aller hande wip, | der guot, der leben und ouch ir
lip, | muoz sin den mannen untertan. | da von muoz ich iu zuo gestan. |
die wip müezen beide tuon und lan | an allen dingen swaz wir man |
wellen und uns dunket guot. | swelch wip des niht gütlichen tuot, die
muoz es tuon, das ist also. | da von hiezen wir si wol vro, | sin und dar
zuo hochgemuot, | si müesen alle wesen vro und ir gemüete tragen ho.
[...]

(I spoke: Lady, I must say, as I have seen many ladies and also lots of women, their possessions, their lives, and their bodies must always be subject to men. This I must admit to you. Women must always do or not do whatever their husbands want and what we consider good. Whichever woman does not do it willingly, she must do it nonetheless, it is as it is. Therefore, we order them to be happy, understanding, and joyful, they must all be happy and in high spirits.)¹³⁵

Ironically, Ulrich, who has presented the standard rules of female conduct and communication in a satirical way, exposing them as conflicting and ambiguous, offers a resolution to the conflict which encapsulates the dilemma of the teaching of female conduct: women are supposed to sub-

¹³² Udry, 'Robert de Blois and Geoffroy de la Tour Landry on Feminine Beauty', p. 95.

¹³³ Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, p. 171.

¹³⁴ Hypermorality that exceeded that of the supposedly ethically superior sex has been recognized as a means of female resistance, cf. Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, pp. 168–74. Crouch mentions several historical examples, among them Elizabeth of Thuringia.

¹³⁵ Ulrich von Lichtenstein, *Das Frauenbuch*, ed. by Young, ll. 1931–46.

mit to men willingly and embrace their inferior role.¹³⁶ This acceptance of their role should be expressed in cheerful conduct. Ulrich therefore *orders* the ladies to be joyful, which is of course a contradiction in terms — the joyous embracing of subjection is precisely what should be communicated by female conduct.¹³⁷ The codes of courtly communication that express these two things — joy and subjection — are each other's exact opposites. Bowed head, tamed gaze, abstinence from speech and laughter characterize the one; friendly acknowledgement, sparkling eyes, kind words, and sweet smiles, the other. In the light of this, it is hardly surprising that Ulrich himself is incapable of resolving the issue.

Once again, the only solution in the inherent courtly ambiguity would lie in the possibility of being able to rely on a match between people's inner attitude and outer behaviour. What Ulrich's answer implies is that if women were truly joyful in their subjection to men, this happiness would show in their comportment. At the same time, men would be able to trust women and would no longer be suspicious about their cheerful conduct, which consequently would no longer risk being perceived as promiscuous and thereby come more easily. This in turn would make the ladies' company more enjoyable for knights, thus realizing the ideal courtly community that is the objective of the rules of courtly communication.

The Court Speaks

To this ideal court, in which people embrace their position and work together to increase the morality of their society, any attempt to speak badly about one of its members in an attempt in advance one's own career poses a serious threat. Slander is among the misuses of language most frequently mentioned in didactic literature and one of the 'sins of the tongue'.¹³⁸ It is found in texts addressing all ranks of dependent men at court. Authors condemn it with a regularity that suggests it was a very widespread phenomenon. It appears that a common way to advance the own career was to damage somebody else's. It is quite obvious why this behaviour should be so strongly discouraged. Slander threatens the ideal community the court is supposed to form. Moreover, it also makes it difficult for the 'wise men' — those in a position to advance such courtiers as might have proven themselves loyal, useful, and capable — to rely on the judgement of others. Reputation was currency and slander

¹³⁶ See Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, pp. 150–56, on the male anxiety against insurgent women.

¹³⁷ See the discussion of the roles in society in Chapter 4, esp. as expressed in *Diu Winsbeckin*, where the willing embrace of her role is the aim of the mother's teachings.

¹³⁸ Casagrande and Vecchio, *I Peccati della lingua*.

could easily destroy someone's good reputation without reason.¹³⁹ This is why courtiers of any rank were advised to be polite and amiable with anyone, not just their superiors, to avoid their hatred. However, aiming to appear pleasant as part of the courtly community could just as easily be interpreted as flattery and deceit. The difference between one and the other lay solely in the intention of the courtier, so any behaviour could (and would) be judged by the courtly community.¹⁴⁰

As we have already seen in the advice of the earlier *Urbain le Courtois*, the judgement of the court on a person is expressed in the way its members talk about someone. Consequences of uncourtly behaviour in the earlier version are said to cause others to 'vous dirra deshonneur' (speak dishonourably of you).¹⁴¹ If the courtier is discouraged from speaking badly about others,¹⁴² much of the advice also revolves around the way others might speak about them.

A good reaction to slander may even increase one's reputation while undermining that of the slanderer. The *Urbain* advises to let the slanderer continue to speak as there is no better way to prove him wrong. When they have told their story, they will be called a fool. This way, one would demonstrate one's own good sense and end up being more loved and believed.¹⁴³ Again, restraint is called for, as one must not succumb to anger or engage with the accusations, as this would cause further commotion and disturb the courtly atmosphere. Spoken from the perspective of the courtier, any reaction would also include the risk of appearing just a foolish as the slanderer. With slander such a widespread phenomenon at the European courts — at least if the court critics are to be believed — there were surely many cases in which destroying another man's reputation did in fact advance the career of the slanderer. However, we also have reports of men who bore such things stoically and were all the more esteemed

139 David Crouch points out that the *losengier* was presented as a 'failure of courtliness' and the 'main contaminant of courtly life' in the French and Occitan literature, Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, p. 142. Robert de Blois dedicates 100 lines to his warning '*Por soi garder des losangeors*', *Enseignement des Princes*, ed. by Fox, ll. 803–904.

140 Schnell, "Curialitas" und "Dissimulatio", p. 91.

141 Earlier *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 111, 91, 75–76 and similarly l. 200.

142 Later *Urbain le Cortois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 147–48: 'Et sur tute rien vous en pri | Ke vous ne mesditez nulli' (And above all, I ask you that you do not slander anyone).

143 Later *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 227–34: 'Et si homme te vout mesdire, | Ne saillez pas pur ceo en ire, | Lessez les dire tout lour voler, | Kar meuntz ne li poetz hunir, | Et quant il avra tot contè, | Si serra il pur fole clamè, | Et tu a sage tout tenuz, | le meuz amé et cremuz' (And if a man wants to speak badly about you, do not jump into rage over it. Let them speak all they want, because this way you may better prove them wrong, and when they have told everything, one will call him out as a fool, and you will be considered wise and loved and believed more).

for it — the ‘best knight in all the world’ William Marshal is such an example.¹⁴⁴

Nor were slander and gossip only of concern for male courtiers — far from it. A lady’s reputation depended substantially on the way people spoke about her, and at stake with her reputation was also the honour of her extended circle, which would also be subjected to the court’s opinion. As all of her expressions, verbal or otherwise, will inevitably be interpreted as indicative of her virtue (or lack thereof), she can hardly avoid being targeted by courtly gossip. Robert de Blois, though he dedicates an entire poem to the way women may express their positive characteristics in outward appearance and behaviour, is nonetheless sympathetic to the fact that someone will always find reason to spread slander. The prologue to the *Chastoiement* warns the lady:

E bien sachiez que mainte dame | S’en retrait sovant de servir, | De
solacier, de conjoir | Plusors, es queus ele feroit | Beaul semblant,
se ce ne dotoit. | Ainçois le doit por ce laisser; | Trop tost puet
son pris abaissier, | Qui molt bien garde ne se prant | de solacier
raignablement. [...] | S’ele an fait trop ne tant ne quant, | A maul li
tornent maintenant | Et dient que c’est grant baudise | Et tost l’avroit
on desoz mise: [...] Mainte dame par sa franchise | Fait beaul samblant
qu’en nule guise | Ne voudroit panser vilonie | Que qu’ele face ne que
(que) die.

(And [you] know well that many a lady has often stepped back from serving, from entertaining, from gladdening many among whom she would have presented a fair manner should she lack confidence. Should she for this reason refrain from company: too quickly can her worth decline, she who does not take great care to entertain/comfort, within reason. [...] If she does too much of it at all, they will turn on her forthwith and say that it is a great impudence. [...] Many a lady, in her generosity, presents a fair manner who in no way intends any misconduct, whatever she does or says.)¹⁴⁵

Just as we have seen in Ulrich von Lichtenstein’s account of ladies’ conduct, Robert de Blois acknowledges that female conduct was subject to much interpretation in a courtly environment and a woman could do very little to prevent the court from judging her. Anything that could be interpreted as joyous courtly conduct and the pleasant manners expected of a noblewoman could also be read as an expression of falsity and promiscuity. Robert seems to be unaware that his own advice in the *Chastoiement* rather

¹⁴⁴ Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, p. 210.

¹⁴⁵ *Chastoiement des Dames*, ed. by Fox, ll. 46–66.

fosters this problem: precepts on female beauty and pleasant conduct meet with admonitions on chastity and submission, but the line between one and the other is not described in any clear way.¹⁴⁶ Ultimately, it is the observer who is the judge of the propriety of conduct. (This applies to the conduct of lower-ranking men as well; however, we see this more systematically in the case of women.) Since the female codes of conduct were so inherently incommensurable with one another, it was a difficult task to act in a way that avoided rebuke altogether.

As gossip bloomed behind a person's back, the antidote was, again, friendship. As any friend's foremost aim was supposed to be to preserve the other's honour, they were the one's a courtier should rely on and, in return, support in any difficulties they may suffer. Didactic authors emphasize for new courtiers the need to gain — and be — a loyal friend, and encourage their readers not to let their own carers advance too much ahead of their friends.¹⁴⁷ Loyal friendship could be a shield against the headwinds that could threaten any courtier's position in the murky waters of the court.¹⁴⁸ This perspective on friendship could, however, also foster the emergence of factions and favouritism at the court and yet again jeopardize the harmony of the community.

The rules of courtly communication as transmitted in didactic works allow us to understand much better the interactions between, and status of, individuals at court. We find that the rules overwhelmingly constituted and communicated rank, with rules of female communication comparable to those for the lowest-ranking members of the court and highly charged with associations about their submissive role and control of their sexuality. The rules for courtiers were meant to enable them to interact with peers and superiors without causing offence and thus to establish or improve their place in the courtly cosmos. At the same time, the lower ranks in the courtly hierarchy were meant to contribute to a joyous atmosphere and thus communicate compliance with their position in the social order. We also see that these rules could be adapted and used contrary to their original purpose for the individual's own interests. Women's overly strict interpretation of dress codes, courtiers' opportunities to advance in the hierarchy by pointing out others' shortcomings (in the guise of mutual correction), the flattery of the advisor who does not give his honest

146 Roberta Krueger in *Woman Readers* suggests that this mixed message — sexualization and communication of unavailability — was deliberate as it combined competing discourses on the female body for a male and a female readership; pp. 181, 178, 162–66. Eventually, the female body is presented as object either of male desire or possession.

147 'Veez qe vostre vie | Ne vous avantez de vostre amye' (See that you do not improve your life over your friend.); later *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 123–24.

148 Crouch draws attention to the depiction of Friendship as natural enemy of Slander in the allegorical poem *Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung (*Rose*, ed. and trans. by Strubel, ll. 302–06 and 448; cf. Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, p. 210).

opinion — all these examples reveal that individuals at court were well aware of the rules and tried to use them for themselves, thus contributing to the further deviation of courtly reality from the courtly ideal.

Conclusion

Unlike court criticism, didactic writers focused on the potentially ideal community the court was meant to constitute. Their advice reveals, however, that they were as aware of its shortcomings as its critics are. By regulating the interaction between members of the court, they attempted to realize its ideal in the hope that regulation of outward behaviour might have repercussions on the inner life. If everyone behaved according to its rules — politely, virtuous, generous, and noble — the court should be a joyous setting that ennobled everyone who had part in it. As it fell short of this ideal, instruction was necessary to allow every well-meaning individual to take up their rightful place and act in accordance with the model of courtly society, in order to allow it to live up to its potential. At the same time, compliance with these rules was supposed to result in individual benefits for the individual who had gained a good reputation. Nonetheless, authors were very much aware that the potential for the individual to improve their own situation meant the courts attracted flatterers and backbiters and encouraged schemes and gossip. The ideal court — if achieved — would not only guarantee the pleasure and sustained honour of its society but create a model for interaction in a well-ordered world, in which elegant manners coincide with inner morality and both can be found in the noblest people who are in charge of leading the society to the common good. The court could be a microcosm that aimed to achieve the balance of joy and virtue and thus perfect harmony in the realm of social interaction. The rules of courtly communication as a collective performance eventually coagulated into the later medieval ceremony that constituted the ‘court as a stage’.¹⁴⁹

The many ways in which the courts fell short of this ideal gave rise to the precise and sometimes contradictory norms of communication. If the ideal was achieved, in which everyone gladly embraced their position and acted with the best intentions, such norms would not be needed. As it was, however, a range of measures had to be in place that communicated that which the court was meant to be. In the search for honesty, loyal friendship

¹⁴⁹ Vale emphasized that royal and princely courts established norms of behaviour and created more or less universally acknowledged expectations of both princely and noble conduct based on household ordinances and reports from these courts, but we find already the beginnings of this in the didactic writing produced for the high medieval courts. ‘Ritual, Ceremony and the Civilising Process’, p. 27.

took central place as it provided a reliable reference point for advice and a shield against slander. In true friendship, the interaction between courtiers or lord and man comes closest to its own ideal. However, as Jaeger pointed out, even in the model friendship recounted in Augustine's *Confessiones*, the ennobling influence of friendship does not, in the end, suffice and full faith in God's guiding hand is necessary to bring the friends to their potential.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, despite all the efforts of didactic writers, their writings acknowledge that the courts consistently fell short of their potential. In their view, mankind would continue to rely on rules of interaction as long as it would not achieve this ideal state of courtly life in which each and every courtier joyfully strove for order and virtue — a state of affairs that only faith, not man-made codes of conduct, would be able to achieve.

¹⁵⁰ Jaeger, 'The Friendship of Mutual Perfecting', p. 191.

Communities of Values

The literature that aimed to teach its readers about morality and good conduct was deeply rooted in the social life of the western European secular elites: its very existence testifies to a growing demand in moral education, the need to be familiar with a specific code of behaviour, and the awareness that written texts were a way to acquire such knowledge. All across north-western Europe and beyond, texts that advocated very similar virtues and conduct were produced, copied, translated, and read. This was possible because the members of elite society for which they were written subscribed to the same values. Norms referred to social ideals rooted in similar ideas about the order of the world and the place of the elites in it. However, such foundational values and social ideals were not identical across north-western Europe. Thus a comparative analysis of the underlying values that are conveyed in didactic writing can grant us insights into the differences that existed in the way society and social roles were envisioned in each socio-political unit and cultural context. Kautsky has identified key values that are shared by the aristocracy of various empires in different times and geographies, which underpinned their self-fashioning as a superior class and placed great stress on the hereditary character of such values, keeping the aristocratic class closed to outsiders. In this chapter, we will examine those values and ideals that provided the basis for teaching and reveal the notion of nobility, its function, and its connection with virtue that can be found at its basis.¹

The first part of this chapter will analyse the benefits authors promise their audiences if they follow their teaching, leading to conclusions about the aims both authors and audiences deemed worthwhile to pursue and thus indicating the shared values on which the teaching was based. In the second part, we will discuss the ideals authors presented to specific groups as aspirational goals, and as means of identification. In the third part, we will reconstruct the functions aristocrats were supposed to fulfil in society and discuss the connection between nobility and virtue, which was crucial for their legitimisation as a social group and in the larger order of the world.

¹ Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires*, pp. 169–210.

Aims of Instruction

In their prologues, and sometimes in the bodies or epilogues of their works, authors explain to their audiences the benefits they will reap from attending to the text and complying with its precepts.² In a more general statement, they justify their writing endeavours, often by using the typical rhetorical topoi for these occasions (such as writing by request or teaching for the love of God and the community).³ These express the authors' sense of duty and their care for the moral wellbeing of their communities — they teach from a place of love and responsibility, which marks them as ideal advisors. In many cases, the justification is put in the mouth of the teacher-persona, the father or a tutor (who might be female), who argue from a similar point of view: their teaching is an act of love and care for the wellbeing and worldly success of the son or tutee (see the discussion in Chapter 3). Courtly society has its rules and to enter a court uninformed had its perils. Instruction in morality and good conduct was presented not only as a way to subdue the *educandus* into compliance with abstract norms, but as a way for them to achieve the most important values in society.

This World and the Next

While many authors offer distinctly secular advice to their lay audiences, the care for their soul is a recurring theme and not a single one fails to mention salvation as an aim of instruction or the duty to love God among their precept. The double aim of success in this world and the next is succinctly invoked by the *Magezoge*, who asserts:

er ist ein richer man | der disen rat behalten kann. | der werlt lop der sele heile | der beider wirt im erbeile'.

2 On prologues as the place to reflect on their (vernacular) literary endeavours, see Wogan-Browne, 'Introduction', pp. xv–xvi.

3 Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*, p. 460 lists justifications Latin authors typically gave in writing for their didactic enterprise, such as the love for their community or being convinced by others to write. By the twelfth century, such justifications became rare for Latin written *doctrina*, but vernacular authors would still occasionally explain their incentives to teach. As explained in Chapter 2, these reasons often served to establish a relationship between authors and audiences. In addition, we often find topoi underlining the usefulness of the reading as a *captatio benevolentia*. As topoi, they are standard, but nonetheless serve an argumentative function; see also the detailed discussion of prologues in vernacular literary theory in Haug, *Vernacular Literary Theory*, with an overview on pp. 10–14.

(Whoever can recall this advice will be a powerful man. Both the world's praise and the salvation of the soul will be bestowed on him.)⁴

Robert of Blois, in his *Enseignement des Princes*, points out that those who pursue worldly honours and prowess must be careful not to neglect their spiritual formation:

Vos qui chevalier avez non | Et de proueece volez renon, | Gardez par
faute de justise | Que vos ne perdez Sainte Yglise. | Se vos volez en bien
durer, | Pansez de Sainte Eglise amer.

(You who carry the title of a knight and want renoun for [your] prowess, watch out for failures of justice, that you do not undermine the Holy Church. If you want to remain in the good, remember to love Holy Church.)⁵

For Robert, in order to achieve great feats of chivalry it is necessary to have a pious mindset, just as Charlemagne did in his battle against the Saracens and others.⁶ The *Enseignements* portray knighthood as divine service by interpreting the knight's armour as an extended allegory for the virtues that help the knight battle the vices, just as knights in combat battle the Saracens.

Other authors, too, combine the pursuit of honour and the salvation of one's soul in intricate ways. In *Der Winsbecke*, a father instructs his son in the ways to gain a reputation — at court, with women, and in his own household. His advice is decidedly secular, but it is framed by pious arguments. The love of God is presented as the first and most important rule, the vanity and temporal character of everything in this world is emphasized, the importance for guidance through life by a priest is mentioned (6), and the son is urged to respect the clerics and be loyal to the priest (st. 2) — all of this before any of the courtly, knightly, or amorous virtues is even mentioned. When the father closes his monologue with three concluding rules (st. 56) *gotes minne* (the love for God) is once more the first rule. On the basis of this Christian orientation the father gives advice for a life suited to a nobleman who does not seek to follow a clerical path. A good life in the world is epitomized in the ideal of knighthood which brings honour: even God will reward this when the time has come (st. 18).

The father's advice as well as the other poems discussed so far aim at optimal chances for success for an ambitious man of noble origin without too much actual influence, for whom the acquisition of the best

⁴ *Magezoge*, ed. by Rosenhagen, ll. 5–8.

⁵ Robert de Blois, *Enseignement des Princes*, ed. by Fox, ll. 5–10.

⁶ Robert de Blois, *Enseignement des Princes*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Ulrich, III, ll. 11–13.

manners and an understanding of the rules of courtly life might provide a chance of social distinction and integration in the elite circles at court.⁷ However, in a turn of events, the inherent addressee, the son, does not accept his father's worldly advice. The younger one does not only reproach the father for his lifestyle, but sharply rejects his wisdom (st. 59, 5–10). A truly wise man would stand as an example to the unwise and show real wisdom by withdrawing from the world. The father's response mirrors the divine inspiration in the speech of the son. He acknowledges the spiritual inspiration of the son and expresses his delight about the prospect of spending his remaining years in seclusion, together with his son. Moved to tears by the son's understanding of God he declares he will change his will, and eventually gives away his possessions to enter a *spital* with his son. While stylistic features suggest that the son's pious intervention was a later addition to the poem, a number of witnesses transmit both parts together. In fact, they occur frequently in codices that collect courtly literature, rather than religious admonition. The most famous among them is the *Codex Manesse*, in which father and son are depicted in a miniature: the father seated, hands raised in a gesture of counting (probably referring to the three final rules of life), the son in clerical habit, clearly receiving the instruction.⁸

Most didactic writing that conveys any general moral advice and exceeds mere listings of rules of conduct claims to be beneficial for the soul, as much as success in the world, and frequently the love of God is presented as the basis of any morality and good conduct, even in cases in which the specific norms and values are of pre-Christian origin. The moral education of a person was evidently to make them a better Christian, and in the eyes of the authors — and probably of the audiences, too — a good life needed to harmonize the requirements of this world with those of the next.

The Honourable and the Useful

The teaching objectives mentioned in the prologues point us directly to the values that authors and audiences (presumably) agreed on. If authors could promote a value as an incentive for their audiences to adapt their behaviour, it must have been relevant in their own framework as well. A key term in this value system that occurs again and again in secular

⁷ Bumke, in his comprehensive study on literary patrons in medieval Germany, has demonstrated that lower nobility (but not *ministeriales*) were the most active patrons, while we have only little evidence of such activity from among the princely families (e.g. the House of Welf); Bumke, *Mäzene im Mittelalter*, pp. 73–123.

⁸ Heidelberg, UB, Cod. Pal. germ. 848, Große Heidelberger Liederhandschrift (*Codex Manesse*), fol. 213^r.

writing is *honour*, and didactic authors invariably refer to its increase as the desired outcome of their teaching. The centrality of the concept of *honour* in medieval noble society can be gleaned from the fact that no author of a didactic text felt the need to specify why it was so important to acquire it.

Honour, in the sense of reputation and good standing, was the very basis of the courtly habitus and thus required no advertising. However, the complexities of courtly life apparently meant that practical considerations sometimes took precedent over honourable deeds. Morality was, however, meant to be a practical science, a notion already prevalent in Stoic philosophy and further developed by Cicero. In *De officiis*, Cicero writes to his son Marcus:

Nam cum multa sint in philosophia et gravia et utilia accurate copioseque a philosophis disputata, latissime patere videntur ea, quae de officiis tradita ab illis et praecapta sunt. Nulla enim vitae pars neque publicis neque privatis neque forensibus neque domesticis in rebus, neque si tecum agas quid, neque si cum alterum contrahas, vacare officio potest, in eoque et colendo sita vitae est honestas omnis et neglegendo turpitudine.

(Although philosophy offers many problems, both important and useful, that have been fully and carefully discussed by philosophers, those teachings which have been handed down on the subject of moral duties seem to have the widest practical application. For no phase of life, whether public or private, whether in business or in the home, whether one is working on what concerns oneself alone or dealing with another, can be without its moral duty; on the discharge of such duties depends all that is morally right, and on their neglect all that is morally wrong in life.)⁹

Almost twelve centuries later, Hugh of Saint Victor writes in the first book of his treatise on learning, 'Understanding, inasmuch as it works both for the investigation of truth and the delineation of morals, we divide into two kinds — into theoretical, that is to say speculative, and practical, that is to say active. The latter is called ethical, or moral.'¹⁰ To know morality was to act right, at least in theory, a conviction echoed by thinkers such as William of Conches and Hugh of Saint Victor.

If this was to remain the case, authors needed to reconcile the perceived mismatch between morality and necessity, and in their didactic texts they often claimed to do just that. The prospect of combining the honourable and the useful is captured most concisely in the Middle High German *Tugendspiegel*. This objective is stated in the introductory lines of

⁹ Cicero, *De officiis*, trans. by Miller, I. II, p. 6.

¹⁰ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon*, ed. by Buttimer, trans. by Taylor, I. 8, p. 55.

the text and repeated several times when a new topic begins: ‘und wer [die rede] hore, daz er so geuare | so ez sye sin frum und sin ere’ (And who listens to this teaching should act accordingly, it will be useful and honourable to him).¹¹

This dichotomy of usefulness and reputation goes back to the one the *Tugendspiegel*-author found in his Latin source, the *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, which divides the virtues it discusses into two groups. The structure of the treatise makes a basic distinction between *honestum* and *utile* and describes the relation and conflicts between the two.¹² The text begins with a proem dedicating the text to a certain *vir optime et liberalis*; this is followed by the body of text, headed *De consilii capiendi deliberatione*, which introduces the importance of counsel before making decisions.¹³ This counsel must take three aspects into account: *honor*, *utilitas*, and situations of conflict between the two.

The twelfth-century *Moralium dogma philosophorum* uses the structure of *De officiis* and fills it in with a large body of quotes by other *auctoritates* on ethics and moral conduct. The tension between the honourable and the useful is explored in the five parts of the main text. Each part is subdivided into several chapters, each dealing with a certain virtue and further subdivided in paragraphs about various aspects of this virtue. Part I, *De honesto*, subdivides into chapters about the cardinal virtues a) *prudentia*, b) *iustitia*, c) *fortitudo* and d) *temperantia*. Part II is dedicated to a comparison and hierarchy of the different aspects of honourable deeds. Part III, *De utile*, treats the various ‘goods’, those of the mind, of the body, and external goods, the *bona fortunae*. Part IV is a short comparison of the different aspects of *utilitas*. Part V finally discusses situations of (apparent) conflict between *honestum* and *utilis* and resolves the opposition. In the public life of an aristocrat, the honourable will always prove useful.¹⁴

A similar conclusion is reached by Giles of Rome in his *De regimine principum* a century and a half later, a text based on Aristotle’s works, which had recently become widely discussed in learned circles.¹⁵ Giles

11 Wernher von Elmendor, *Tugendspiegel*, ed. by Bumke, vv. 6–7.

12 *Das Moraliū dogma philosophorum*, ed. by Holmberg, pp. 8–9.

13 Some manuscripts add H. or Henrice (*Das Moraliū dogma philosophorum*, ed. by Holmberg, p. 7), which fostered the ascription to William of Conches with Henry II. as a dedicatee. Cf. e.g. Delhay, ‘Un adaption du *De officiis* du XII^e siècle’, p. 228.

14 ‘Summa uero auctoritate philosophi tria hec, scilicet bonum, honestum, utile sic permiscunt, ut quicquid bonum est, id etiam utile censeant, et quicquid honestum (est), idem bonum esse astruant. Vnde sequitur omne honestum utile esse.’ (Truly, by the highest authority, of the philosophers mix these three things, that is to say the good, the honourable and the useful, in such a way that whatever is good, this they believe to be useful, and whatever is honourable, they add that the same is good. Whence it follows that all honourable is useful. *Das Moraliū dogma philosophorum*, ed. by Holmberg, p. 69).

15 On its distribution, cf. Briggs, *Giles of Rome’s De Regimine Principum*.

adapts Aristotle's *Ethics* explicitly for the use of a ruler. To him, the morally good — *honestum* — is the highest good as it is intrinsically good and serves the community, whereas the useful serves the individual only. He concludes that the individual good is, on some level, always included in the common good, so that the honourable is always superior.¹⁶ Though the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* and Giles' *De regimine* are based on different traditions of moral philosophy, both drew on the notion that honour was central to the public persona and thus useful to themselves and the running of public affairs. Cicero himself was indebted to Aristotle's teaching and Aristotelian thought in general,¹⁷ and in turn, Cicero influenced the great Christian political thinkers such as Augustine.¹⁸ The *Moralium dogma* adopts *De officiis* for a learned twelfth-century readership but the reception of the work, especially of its many vernacular adaptations, indicates that Cicero's advice for the public person was relevant for aristocratic audiences in the high and late Middle Ages.

Though the various versions deal differently with the structural dichotomy depending on their respective objectives and audiences, the combination of honour and necessity remains present in all of them. The German adaptation of the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* from the 1180s collapses this into a double formula, reminding its audiences regularly of the aim of the instruction: it should be practical and it should increase one's honour. The *Tugendpiegel* focuses on applicability. Therefore, it can skip the discussion of general principles and aim to enable its audience to combine the two goods in their political conduct. Giles of Rome, on the other hand, explicitly focuses on general principles as he aims to convey a broader instruction on the morality of the ruler.

A hundred years after the *Tugendpiegel*, the *Moralitez des philosophes* opts for a different approach and closely translates the *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, preserving the dichotomy and the structure of opposition and resolution. Thus, it engages its readership in the process of reconciliation of the honourable and the useful. Based on the French prose version, the Italian and the Icelandic translation do the same. Even the *mise-en-verse* of Alard de Cambrai, which aids the reception of the classical authorities through moralizing commentaries, retains the structure. It is not clear if the greater success of these later versions has to do with their approach to the contrast between these two values; however, the fact that the vast majority of these texts — from Cicero, to the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* and its vernacular versions, to Giles of Rome — address their conflict and aim to link the one with the other indicates that the requirements of aristocratic life were thought to lead to such a conflict, and

16 Kempshall, *The Common Good*, pp. 143–44.

17 Nederman, *Medieval Aristotelianism*, 563.

18 Horn, 'Politische Gerechtigkeit bei Cicero und Augustinus'.

that the audience sought guidance as to how they could balance honour and necessity in their political lives. Medieval didactic authors were well aware of the differences between the world as it should be and the court as it was, and they knew that their audiences were, too. If they promoted certain behaviours as both useful and honourable, it was in an attempt to change courtly society one person at a time.

Honour was, however, not just relevant for those who governed extensive estates. The prominence of honour as a teaching objective in texts for lower-ranking audiences was also a concession to the fact that reputation was hard currency at the courts, and being held in disregard by influential people could mean the end of a career at court and loss of privileges. *Der Jüngling* argues that discipline (*zuht*) prevents the scorn of esteemed people at court, which he calls *die wisen* (the wise men).¹⁹ The *wisen* (also called the *werden*, ‘the worthy’, in texts with a stronger focus on virtue rather than learning) was the group whose judgement decided what was good conduct and also the group who could grant favours. *Der Winsbecke* claims that if a son wanted to decorate his youthfulness with honour, he needs discipline and virtue (*zuht* and *tugent*, st. 22, 3) to win the appreciation of the worthy men at court (st. 23). The recognition of the worthy as an aim is also mentioned in *Diu Winsbeckin*, the *Magezoge*, and *Der welsche Gast*. The Anglo-Norman *Urbain le Courtois* recommends copying the behaviour of the *riche* (powerful) and seeking the appreciation of the wise (*sage*).²⁰ They are not defined as a group but are clearly the counterpart to the *tumben*, the uneducated, who do not know how to behave at court. Disciplined conduct grants a high reputation which equals influence in courtly society:

Swere minne zuht und ere | der volge miner lere. | er ist ein richer man, |
der diesen rat behalten kann.

(Whoever loves discipline and reputation may follow my teaching.
He who can observe this counsel is a powerful man.)²¹

Across the corpus of moral-didactic writing in the vernaculars, reputation is the most prominent value presented as the aim of instruction. In the French texts, it is captured in the term *preux* (valiant, of great qualities,) and to become a *preudome* was considered the greatest worldly achievement of courtly conduct. This esteem was, ideally, won by a virtuous life, the teaching of which is the aim of the majority of moral-didactic texts from the period.

19 Konrad von Haslau, *Der Jüngling*, ed. by Haupt, ll. 1–3.

20 Earlier *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 143 and 181, pp. 383–455.

21 *Magezoge*, ed. by Rosenhagen, ll. 3–6.

Ideals of Medieval Aristocrats

If the prologues reveal to us the aims of instruction and thus allow us insights into the values on which moral education was based, the bodies of the texts construct ideals to which their readership should aspire. For the purposes of this chapter, we can consider an ‘ideal’ a bundle of characteristics that together develop the image of the perfect individual from a given group. While not all authors agree on the characteristics of the perfect man or woman, we find a surprisingly large accord of male and female ideals in moral-didactic writing. Firstly, all authors envision the ideal man or woman to be of noble birth and — while concessions are sometimes made for men of limited means — they generally consider them to be wealthy. Another common denominator for men and women is Christian faith and piety. Apart from these shared characteristics, we can approximately distinguish two ideals for men that are closely related: the more general ideal man, the *preudome*, and the more specifically military ideal of the chivalric knight.

Self-fashioning: The Preudome

As the *wisen* and *werden* are to German texts, the *preudome* is to the French texts. Large parts of the *Doctrinal Sauvage* engage with a definition of this category. While the first thirty-six stanzas offered general teachings for the secular elite, the second part explicitly addresses the highest ranks of society.²² In this context, the author attempts a definition of the *preudome* and describes his conduct. The ideal of the *preudome* is often mentioned²³ but rarely defined in moral-didactic writing. Just as with many other values, the authors seem to assume that such terms are commonly understood as they are central to polite society as they are the manifestation of that courtly habitus. The few instances that explain them in any detail accordingly engage with conflicting notions of what the term might encompass. The *Doctrinal* describes different types of men in relation to the concept. Firstly, there are those men whose behaviour is contrary to the ideal of the *preudome* and ‘qui font grans aatines, outrages et desrois | Et sunt fol

22 ‘Or devons nous parler de le bien ahute gent, | De rois, de dus, de contes, de prinches ensement, | De trestous chaus a qui grant signourie apent, | Coument il doivent vivre et bien et saintement’, *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, st. xxxvii, 1–4: ‘Now we need to speak of the good highborn people, of the king, the dukes, the counts, of the princes together, of all those who are entitled to great lordships, how they must live well and reverently’.

23 It occurs in the *Urbain le Courtois* as well as in the *Livre des Manieres*. It is used also in the *Bon Enfant* (ed. by Parsons, l. 39, pp. 46–48), but plays a minor role there: the key term for good conduct is *courtoisie*. The term is also used in the *Britton*, *La Estoire de Saint Aedward le Rei*, and other texts.

et mesliu et mainent grans bouffois | Et puis ne valent rien a guerres
n'as tournois' (who make great violence, outrages and disorder, and are
foolish and violent and keep great arrogance and then they are worth
nothing in war or in tournament).²⁴ The *Doctrinal* bemoans their lack of
courtliness (xxix, 5). Untamed violence, arrogance, and aggression with
little capability in war and tournament do not make a *preudome*.

This is elaborated on later in the poem. In stanza xxxiv, this man is
described as one who loves tournaments, but is hostile, violent, evil, and
offensive to his neighbours, but generally not praised for his skill of arms.²⁵
This type is referred to in the third person. Men like this exist, but the
author does not suggest his audience consists of such men. In a rhetorical
move, the author presumes that his audience consists of honourable fight-
ers:

Se vous estes as armes corageus et hardis | Gardés par mal teches ne
perdés vostre pris. | Soijés loiaus et sages, courtois et bien apsis | Si que
vos ne soiés trop laidement repris.

(If you are brave and hardy in arms watch out that moral blemishes
do not ruin your praise. Be loyal and wise, courteous and well-
mannered, so that you would not be too easily criticized; *Doctrinal*
Sauvage, st. xxx)

Following this list of virtues, the *Doctrinal* asks, 'Quidiés vous estre sire
pour un peu de prouche | Puis ke il n'a en vous aucune bone teche?' (Do
you believe that you are a lord because of a little prowess, when you do not
have any good qualities in you?)²⁶ The text clearly distances itself from the
notion that prowess and military success are sufficient for the reputation of
his noble audience; it needs a combination of courtesy and prowess to be
a *preudome*: 'Hounis soit herdemens u il n'a gentilleche' (Condemned be
bravery where it has no nobility).²⁷ As a knight one should be travelling to
tournaments and wars, be hardy in combat but nonetheless be 'noble, civil
and distinguished' (*gentils, debonaires et frans*) as well as of beautiful and
pleasant qualities (*beles et plaisans*, st. xxxii). By necessity, the tournament
is even more prominent than military prowess, as it enables a man to

²⁴ *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, st. xxix, 2–4.

²⁵ 'Et s'il est aucuns hom qui volentiers tournie, | qui soit fel et meslius, plains de pautonnerie, |
avers et angoisseus, a poi de courtoisie | et rihoteus voisins, plains de torchonnerie, | il sera
plus blasés de sa grant felounie que il ne soit loés de sa chevalerie: | On puet perdre bon pris
par laide vilounie' (And if there is a man who trouneys willingly, who would be hostile and
quarrelsome, full of viciousness, avers and bad-tempered, of little courtesy, and also violent,
full of brutality, he will be hurt more by his great cruelty as he would not be praised for his
chivalry); *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, st. xxxiv.

²⁶ *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, st. xxxi, 1–2.

²⁷ *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, st. xxxi, 4.

demonstrate both of the required qualities of a *preudome*: prowess and refined manners. The tournaments of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were certainly fierce and violent battles, albeit in an organized context. Chroniclers like Gislebert de Mons bemoan the use of sharp weapons and a tendency to settle old scores. Scholars have shown that tournaments were not just playful forms of combat (like the *mêlée*) that allowed individual knights to shine as part of a lord's retinue and win prizes, but also an important tool to train the knights to fight in formation, as they would do in an actual battle. In the twelfth century, they were often fought with sharp weapons and many a knight lost his life — for the year 1175 it is recorded that in Saxony alone sixteen knights died in tournaments.²⁸ In the late twelfth century and into the thirteenth century, tournaments were often organized as splendid courtly celebrations in which the actual fighting was framed by food, dance, and music, where the knights and lords were watched by other lords and their ladies in these different contexts so that a display of rich clothing, physical beauty, and pleasant manners became an essential part of the occasion. The expansive events served not just to represent the lords who organized and equipped them — often at very high cost²⁹ — but also integrated the nobility and knighthood into their social network and provided occasions to create community across north-western Europe. As the tournament moved from a field to specific courts, women and other spectators could get closer to the scene and were also integrated into the representative character of the event. Women apparently became an integral part of tournaments, not just as spectators but as decoration or motivation to fight.³⁰ A great fighter in tournaments could reach the degree of repute enjoyed by top modern athletes, their successes cheered for and their losses bemoaned. If such a fighter knew how to behave during the associated festivities, he could gain substantial benefits in reputation, remuneration, and social standing. At such events, a man could display all aspects of his distinction, 'Pour preudons est tens de sages counissans' (for a *preudomme* is respected for his discriminating intelligence).³¹

28 Nicholson, *Medieval Warfare*, p. 118.

29 Vale, *The Princely Courts* details some of the incurring costs of tournaments that exceed those of the festivities but also accounts for recompensation of knights for losses suffered in the tourneying party of a lord and finds evidence that organisers of tournaments would make debts to finance these events (pp. 184–91). Janse, 'Tourneyers and Spectators', finds that spectators sometimes co-financed the event (pp. 47–48).

30 Rösener, *Leben am Hof*, pp. 208–12.

31 *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, st. xxxii.

The *Doctrinal* also discusses the worthiness (*valoir*) of a man who is brave and knows how to behave beautifully (*vaillans est et bel se set avoir*) but is of low birth (*bas parage*).³² Such a person, according to the *Doctrinal*, must be valued what he is worth, as long as he does not behave arrogantly or become presumptuous against the *vous* in the poem, implying that this *vous* addresses a higher-ranking member of nobility. *Bas parage* seems to imply a low rank within the nobility (*parage* being a group of equals) rather than a member of another, lower social class.³³ This stanza may refer to the social climbers, the court officials from the lowest stratum of nobility who are often despised by the higher-ranking courtiers, especially when they began to exercise more and more influence in the court hierarchy due to their administrative functions.³⁴ The *Doctrinal* argues that they must be valued for their good qualities, but only as long as they do not use their influence in a presumptuous way (XXIII, 5).

The superior man — which is what the *preudome* essentially embodies — is rich and powerful, and familiar with both tournament and war (XXXV). While non-nobles could in theory be *preudoms*, the didactic writing of the period predominantly addresses the high-born man of elegant manners. He keeps good company and shows generosity. He loves his lord, his men, and his neighbours, keeps justice and promotes the law. Since he honours the holy church, even God appreciates a life conducted in such a way.³⁵ The honour of the *preudome* goes beyond the praise of his peers. By combining all possible virtues, he also earns his reward in the afterlife. The combination of power, military prowess but gentle manners, and just judgement is the highest ideal, one to which all must aspire but only a few can attain. Didactic writers acknowledged that this was the case and encouraged men to collect as many of the qualifiers as possible according

32 *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, st. XXIII.

33 Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*, pp. 135–48 found ‘parage’, which he translated with ‘rank’ the second defining feature of the new nobility, next to lineage: ‘[...] if lineage is a twelfth-century word that usually indicates vertical perceptions of family tracked back through time, “parage” is a word which usually talks of a different perspective on family, betraying horizontal ideas; seeing an individual and his connections (*liens*) focussed in the present moment’ (p. 136).

34 See Turner, *Men Raised from the Dust* and Turner, ‘Changing Perceptions’.

35 ‘S’il est uns riches hom et avoec chou savoit de tournois et guerres, se mestier en avoit, et fust bons vivendiers et souvent le faisoit et bone compaignie as chevaliers portoit, son signour et ses houmes et ses voisins amoit et tenist bien justiche et avanchast le droit et il a son pooir sainte glise essauchoit, si tel vie menast et en tel point moroit par le mien ensient Diu et le siecle aroit.’ (If he is a rich man and with this knows tournaments and wars, if he had the need to, and he gave freely and often and he gave good company to the knights, loved his lord and his men and his nearest and held justice and advanced the law and he elevated the church according to his power, and if he led such a life and remained in such a way then according to my knowledge he will have God and this world); *Doctrinal Sauvage*; ed. by Sakari, st. XXXV.

to their station. It is particularly the military aspect that many writers deem less necessary.

The courtly *preudome* as introduced in the *Doctrinal* is described as follows:

Puis que li riches hom set gent bien hebergier | Et k'il set a la court
bien son ami aidier | Et plaidier sagement at loiaument jugier | Et
deffenre son droit quant il en a mestier: | Teus hom puet mout bien
estre preudom sans tornoijer.

(When rich men know well how to host people, and they support their friends well at the court, and plead wisely and judge faithfully and defend their right when it is needed: These men can very well be *preudomes* without tourneying.)³⁶

Similarly, *Der Welsche Gast* describes his ideal knight as a courtier, while he mocks those who dream of achieving renown through great chivalric performance.³⁷

However, the way the *Doctrinal* as well as Thomasin argue indicates that the notion of chivalric prowess was still central to the concepts of a *preudome*, chevalier, or knight. In the *Doctrinal*, the *chevalier errans* is just one type of *preudome*,³⁸ but nonetheless even the courtly type of *preudome* must be able to defend himself. Violence, though measured and tamed by courtly manners and good judgement, was a vital part of this concept.³⁹

The *Doctrinal* makes concessions for another type of exemplary man: he is not rich nor powerful, but courteous and spoken of well, not violent, evil, or dishonest; basically, full of good qualities, but poor. He must also be valued and surely he will receive his reward in time. The *Doctrinal* praises the man who knows good conduct even if he is of *bas parage*. The text does not attribute the title *preudome* to him, though. In other cases, excellent men, even those from non-noble backgrounds are referred to as *preudoms*.⁴⁰ The *Doctrinal* is occupied with the legitimization of noble lifestyles and thus awards this distinction only to them. This shows that the notion of virtue and merit as influential factors were features of the

36 *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, st. xxxiii.

37 Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, ll. 3647–52.

38 The *chevallier errant* is the literary type of the adventurous young knight, travelling to tournaments and war camps, courting ladies and demonstrating his prowess. See Chénierie, *Le chevalier errant* on the literary topos. On the travelling knight as a historical figure, see Brown, 'Leavetaking'.

39 Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*, pp. 30–37 follows Marc Bloch in his suggestion that *preudome* is a concept prior to *chevalerie*. The eleventh-century *preudomme*, according to Crouch, becomes the chevalier in the last quarter of the twelfth century, as part of the 'chivalric turn'. Cf. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, vol. 2, pp. 305–06. In the *Doctrinal Sauvage*, *preudome* is the dominant concept with the *chevalier* being but one group of the people who earn this label.

40 Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*, pp. 30–37; Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, pp. 56–82.

literature that provided advice for life at court. However, the way these precepts are singled out also shows beyond doubt that the ideal combined wealth, reputation, and power.

The true *preudome* is either the *chevalier*, combining all the chivalric virtues, including a taste for danger and adventure, or a sensible lord who does not venture into any unnecessary or dangerous enterprises, but nonetheless knows how to defend what is his. As Crouch formulates it, the *preudome* ‘provides a model of conduct, something to aim at in the competition for status in medieval male society and something to use to criticise the behaviour of others.’⁴¹ Thus, the *preudomes* enjoyed authority at the battlefield as well as the court: they were the ones who judged appropriate conduct and rewarded those who fulfilled their role.

Service: The Chivalric Knight

Some aspects of the *preudome* can only be described as knightly. This combination of prowess and virtue was central to both the increasingly popular notion *chivalry* and to *preudomie* — indeed, it is difficult to distinguish precisely between the two. Whether at court or in a tournament, most texts discuss the knight with regards to its ideal conduct.

Modern English provides us here with a distinction that Latin, Old French, and Middle High German did not use: that between knighthood, the profession, and chivalry, the ideal.⁴² For eleventh-century authors, *miles* could refer to a vassal or a warrior of any rank.⁴³ As a term for the latter, it meant little more than a man capable of armed combat on horseback, from a king or emperor’s man to a retainer who had to be equipped with a horse and sword by his lord. It was only in the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that *miles* came to denote noble status,⁴⁴ and it is around the same time that we can begin to distinguish the profession from the code of conduct. The chivalric ideal consists of a cluster of virtues and a code of conduct on the one hand, and a type of performative self-representation on the other. Whether writing in Latin,

41 Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*, p. 33.

42 A large body of scholarship has been written on medieval knighthood and chivalry. Bumke, *Studien zum Ritterbegriff*, unpacks for the first time the various layers of meaning — social group, military service, chivalric ideal — in the German term *ritter* (knight) and the development of its semantics in the High Middle Ages. Internationally, research has focused on knighthood as a social group (e.g. Barthelemy, *La Chevalerie*; Arnold, *German Knighthood*; Borst, *Ritterliche Lebensformen im Mittelalter*; Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*; for an overview of the development of research on that topic see Crouch, *Chivalry*, pp. 253–67) or chivalry as a code of conduct (Keen, *Chivalry*; Scaglione, *Knights at Court*, and most recently Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*).

43 Fleckenstein, ‘Über den engeren und weiteren Begriff von Ritter’.

44 Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*, pp. 94–95.

French, or German, medieval writers used just one word to encompass all these semantic fields: *miles*, *chevalier*, *riter*. The *Tugendspiegel* from the late twelfth century translates the term *copiae equestres* as *riter* when referring to warriors on horseback.⁴⁵ The author does not seem to ascribe any particular ideal to being a *riter*. On the contrary, when encouraging his audiences to urge their warriors to fight honourably in battles, the author uses *recken* (warriors) and by ‘honourable’ fighting he means bravery, rather than any other chivalric virtue.

A generation later, the *Winsbecke* describes knighthood (*schildes ambet*) in very different terms. The shield stands in for the concept of knighthood — which was already connected with the ideal of chivalry — and it is in itself worthy and honourable, even if taken up by a person with no knowledge of its associated conduct and virtues.⁴⁶ This reasoning recalls arguments about the inherent deference owed to the clergy, even when an individual clergyman might not deserve it.⁴⁷ Chivalric knighthood becomes a lifestyle and a natural order with its own rules, duties, and responsibilities:

Sun wil du ganzlich schilt es reht | erkennen so wis wol gezogen | triwe
milt kuon unde sleht | so ist er an dir niht betrogen | und cumt din
lop wol fur giflogen | wilt aber du leben in frier wal | den tugenden
allen vor verlogen | der red min triu si din pfant. | wil du in also ze hals
nemen | er hienge baz an einer want.

(Son, if you wish fully to grasp the nature of the shield, be courteous, loyal, generous, bold, and upright. Then you will not betray it, and praise will fly to you. But if you would rather act on a whim, neglecting all virtue from the very beginning, then let my oath serve as your guarantee for my words: if you wish to wield the shield in this manner, it would fare better left hanging on the wall).⁴⁸

45 Wernher von Elmendorf, *Tugendspiegel*, ed. by Bumke, ll. 189–90: ‘hi is zu rosse so manic riter gemeit | daz ich in wez nehein velt so breit’; translating *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, 1. A. 1 ‘explicandis copiis equestribus campestris’.

46 *Der Winsbecke*, in *Winsbeckische Gedichte*, ed. by Leitzmann, st. 17: ‘Sun du solt wizen daz der schilt | hat werdikeit und eren vil | den ritter tugend niht bevilt | der in ze reht tragen wil | die warheit ich dich niht en hil | er ist zer werlt sunder wan | ein hoh gemezzen fræuden zil | nimt in ze hals ein tumber man | der im sin reht erkennet niht | da ist der schilt unschuldig an’ (Son, you should know that the shield represents an esteemed and honourable way of life. The knight who carries it rightly will never falter in virtue. I will not conceal the truth from you: truly, the shield represents in this world a lofty and joyful goal. But if a foolish man takes it up, one who does not grasp its duties and responsibilities, well, the shield is not to blame. Trans. by Rasmussen and Trokhimenko).

47 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, st. 45, similarly *Der Winsbecke*, in *Winsbeckische Gedichte*, ed. by Leitzmann, st. 7.

48 *Der Winsbecke*, in *Winsbeckische Gedichte*, ed. by Leitzmann, st. 19.

Knighthood is described as an ‘office’ that comes with great prestige and a lifestyle very similar to that of the *preudome*. Yet there were aspects of the chivalric ideal that do not feature in the ideal of the *preudome*, which granted chivalry lasting success and paradoxically increased its appeal: specifically, the chivalric focus on hardship and service.

The hardships of knighthood were surely a major factor in its revaluation as divine service. Suffering was *imitatio Christi*.⁴⁹ Robert de Blois, in his allegory of the knight as a fighter against vice and defender of Christianity, dedicates 177 verses to the Christian knight who approaches salvation by imitating the virtues and ordeal of Jesus Christ.⁵⁰ While knighthood as a profession was hard work,⁵¹ it was also a privilege. The determination of clerical didactics to discourage the knights from splendour and the search for praise only underlines how deeply ingrained they were in the notion of chivalry. Thomasin sarcastically describes the praise a man could gain as a dashing knight at court, exposing it as flattery:

swenn die croireære | vor den rîtern schriënt sêre | ‘zâh schewaliers, rîter
guot, | edel und ouch hôh gemuot’, | sô dunkt sich der ein lewe gar, |
der ein schande ist der vrumen schar.

(When the flatterers call out to the knight: ‘Hey, chevalier, good knight, noble and joyous!’ then even the one who is an embarrassment to the number of the brave considers himself a lion.)⁵²

Interestingly, Thomasin uses the French term uniquely in this passage, where it refers to the empty praise that chivalry — as opposed to knighthood — could attract. Chivalry as a means of self-representation was clearly known to him and closely associated with the reception of French courtly culture. The image that he promotes is that of knighthood — a vocation in the service of God — not of chivalry, a performance of excellence without real dedication.

The tension between lordship and service determined the interpersonal connections of the European elites, as well as matters of rank, hierarchy, and social identity. While all men and women addressed in the tracts and poems on morality and good conduct were in positions of superiority, almost all of them also owed service to someone else. However, duty was not in contrast with nobility but formed an integral part

49 Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*, pp. 57–65 and 96–104.

50 Robert de Blois, *Enseignement des Princes*, ed. by Fox, ll. 1237–1414.

51 Thomasin von Zerclaere, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 7785–92: Der mac niht rîters ambet phlegen | der niht enwil wan samfte leben. (Whoever wishes nothing but a calm life cannot exercise the knightly office.)

52 Thomasin von Zerclaere, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 3647–52.

of aristocratic self-perception, as Kautsky has demonstrated for imperial elites all over the world, in particular in connection with military service.⁵³ The prominence of service was, however, much stronger in the German texts, which has to do with the social rank of its audience and the fact that this vernacular literature was, to a large extent, addressed to and sometimes written by *ministeriales* — originally unfree servants who, in the course of the twelfth century, merged with the lower nobility.⁵⁴ This might also explain the greater emphasis that German didactic writing placed on loyalty (*triuwe*) as a key value. The service to one's superior could be the defining feature of a person's social standing, and the status of *ministeriales* in particular depended on the rank of the person they served.⁵⁵ Young men and women from these circles may have been particularly interested in conduct literature and moral instruction as they did not often have access to the same courtly instruction as higher-ranking peers of their age, and in the absence of possessions and property depended strongly on reputation and esteem in order to secure a living. They might also have had a great interest in participating in the claim to moral excellence, on which nobles otherwise claimed a monopoly due to their line of descent. It was also the *ministeriales* who formed a substantial proportion of the armed horsemen to whom the model of chivalry provided an ennobling code of conduct — one so prestigious that even the emperor drew on it in his self-representation at times.⁵⁶

Even in France, where knights had probably always been part of the nobility,⁵⁷ knighthood carried a notion of service, at the very least to God. In the propagation of the crusades, the metaphor of the *militia Christi* — originally referring to monks — was taken literally and transferred to the armed pilgrims that made their way to the Holy Land. Knighthood became divine service, and as such became a suitable ideal even for kings and princes.⁵⁸ Seen in this light, it became clear that knighthood had to be connected with, even controlled by the Church. Clerical authors often associate it with a religious order. Thomasin thus appeals to the knights to recall the ritual by which they were raised to their rank: 'gedenket, ritr, an iuwern orden: Zwiu sit ir ze riter worden?' (Remember your order,

⁵³ Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires*, pp. 169–74.

⁵⁴ Bumke, *Ministerialität und Rittertum*, pp. 50–55.

⁵⁵ Imperial *ministeriales* (Reichsministerialen) in the service of an emperor and those serving a bishop had much greater privileges than those who served a count. Keupp, *Dienst und Verdienst*, p. 370.

⁵⁶ Wolter and Deutsch, 'Der Mainzer Hoftag'.

⁵⁷ According to Barthelemy, *La Chevalerie*, pp. 69–70.

⁵⁸ On the process that elevated the knightly status to encompass even kings in the Empire, see Peltzer, 'Imperial Chivalry', p. 64.

knights: How did you become knights?)⁵⁹ Étienne de Fougères, author of the French *Livre des Manières*, regards knighthood as a quasi-religious institution. As a *haute ordre*, it required vocational training, comparable to that of a monk:

Membre li deit, et cel sovent, | qu'en leialté ust son jovent | plus que nul
moigne de covent. | L'espee prist par tel covent.

(He [the knight] must remember frequently that he should spend his youth in loyalty, more than a monk in a convent. He has received his sword under this condition.)⁶⁰

The conduct required of a monk and of a knight do indeed share some similarities. Instructional books such as the *De institutione novitiorum* and the *Didascalicon*, written by Hugh of St Victor in the twelfth century, include precepts of good conduct that were similarly required by young noblemen and became part of the chivalric ethics. The comprehensive humanist educational programme of the Augustine canons offered comparable teachings.⁶¹ A knight was supposed to earn the acknowledgement of his order by acting according to its precepts and could be expelled from it for misconduct, according to Étienne.⁶² As they had received their sword in a church, the Church was obliged to sanction his behaviour. In his writings, Étienne (along with many other clerics), attempts to influence the interpretation of knightly status, in which the increased influence of the Church was visible in the dubbing ritual. Initially a simple rite of passage, it became increasingly fortified with Christian symbolism and, at the same time, ceremonial elements and ritual splendour; it thus exemplifies the same tendencies that characterized the chivalric ideal itself.⁶³

Chivalry was comparable to religious lifestyles not just because it was interpreted as an order but also because it offered a means of self-representation and an expression of elite status. As such, it could encompass the highest ranks of the clergy as well as elite laity. Despite much criticism, bishops were at the forefront of medieval warfare in both fiction and history.⁶⁴ Especially prior to the monastic reforms of the eleventh

59 Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 7769–70.

60 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, st. 150.

61 Jaeger, 'Der vollkommene Mensch', p. 230.

62 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, st. 156–57: 'Sauver se pout bien en son ordre | si l'en ne trouve que remordre. | S'a traison se veult amordre | ne par engin pincier ne mordre | sil deit l'en bien desordener, | tolir l'espee [...] et entre chevalers geter.' (He can save himself within his order if nothing can be found to reproach him. If he turns to disloyalty, bestes others though cunning, or torments them, then he must lose his rank and his sword must be denied to him [...] and he is expelled from among the knights.)

63 Liebermann, 'A New Approach to the Knighting Ritual'.

64 Cf. Gerrard, *The Church at War*.

century, fighting bishops are frequently encountered.⁶⁵ As owners of large estates and members of noble families, they engaged in warfare before and after their consecrations.⁶⁶ Despite the attempts to distinguish more clearly between the spheres of secular nobility and clergy in the twelfth century, bishops continued to go to war and to present themselves as knights.⁶⁷ The combination of aristocratic life with chivalry, on the one hand, and the interpretation of knighthood as divine service, on the other, provided the basis for clerical knighthood; knightly bishops adhered to a chivalric ideal that even learned writers often acknowledged.⁶⁸ Didactic writers occasionally criticized the high clergy for conduct that was seen as too courtly. Étienne de Fougères describes the ideal archbishop in terms not dissimilar from those of the ideal king,⁶⁹ and admonishes the bishops for the money-lending that financed their aristocratic lifestyle:

N'emprunt pas a jable n'a monte | por teir de chevaus grant conte, |
 quar los de secle rien ne monte; | s'il est povre, n'en ait ja honte. |
 Bobanz de secle est chose enposte: | hom mesurez s'en geite et oste. | A
 un ostel confunt son oste | qui trop grant gent o sei acoste.

(He does not borrow with usury or with interest to afford a great number of horses, because the praise of the world does not count; if he is poor, he has no shame. The world's ostentation is unbecoming, the measured man shuns and avoids it. He embarrasses his host when he is accompanied by too great a retinue.)⁷⁰

By the thirteenth century, bloodshed was forbidden for clerics by canon law,⁷¹ but this did not stop the practice, nor the discussion. Bishops continued to lead courts that resembled those of the magnates and subscribed to similar ideals.

65 See e.g. the *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium*, commissioned in the first half of the eleventh century, which details the military feats of the bishops of Cambrai, with Berengar of Cambrai being fashioned as a 'Warrior on horseback' (Fichtenau, *Living in the Tenth Century*, p. 207), *Deeds of the Bishops of Cambrai*, ed. and trans. by Bernard and Bachrach.

66 Crosby, *The King's Bishops*, pp. 286–87.

67 Pavlac, ed., *Deeds of Alberic of Trier*.

68 For a discussion of the clerical warrior in high medieval England and France, see the unpublished PhD thesis of Nakashian, 'A new kind of Monster'. For Germany, see Arnold, 'German Bishops'.

69 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, ll. 409–12: De voir cor aint humilité, | quar tot le secle est vanité: | il n'i a pas meinant cité, | ainz enquiert durable érité. (He loves humility from all his heart, because all the world is vanity. There are no permanent cities, he searches for eternal heritage.)

70 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, ll. 413–36.

71 Duggan, 'The Evolution of Latin Canon Law'.

While chivalry in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries became an influential part of noble self-representation, it was not identical with it. In fact, part of its success — but also, over time, its decline — may have been that it was more inclusive than nobility, especially in its high medieval manifestation, before ennobling became more widespread. The complex relationship between *adoubement* and noble status bears witness to the fact that knighthood, chivalry, and nobility were related, but ultimately being a knight, even a chivalrous one, did not always gain a man access to noble rank.⁷²

The focus on military prowess in combination with refined manners connects the *preudome* with the chivalric ideal — the line between the two is not always clear and both ideals influenced each other. The rise of chivalry may also be analysed in connection with several developments in high medieval politics and social stratification, notably the crusading movement and shifts in the structure of the European nobility. The difference between *preudome* and chivalric knight is, as we have seen, not so much the military aspect: a noble *preudome* (certainly from the twelfth century onwards) was expected to tourney, just as knights were seen as well-mannered courtiers. The main distinguishing feature is the connotation of service that was inherent in the chivalric ideal. In French texts, this service is mostly due to the Church, while German didactic authors often emphasized the duty to loyally serve a temporal lord, too. The ideal of the *preudome* was more encompassing but it, too, combined inner qualities and good conduct with ‘external’ goods like wealth and poise. The chivalric ideal drew its appeal from the notion of worthiness and divine sanction that made it attractive for *ministeriales* as much as for kings and emperors.

Ideal Women

The ideal to which women could aspire is described in much less detail than those for their male counterparts. David Crouch has emphasized that a major difference between the concepts of *preudomie* and chivalry was that, while women could be *prou*, chivalry was an inherently male code of conduct.⁷³ The *preudfemme* was defined by her behaviours and inner virtues just as much as the *preudome*, but the spheres in which they could be displayed were more limited.⁷⁴ Though we know that women led successful military campaigns,⁷⁵ prowess had no part in the *preudfemme*

⁷² The question of how much upward social mobility was possible for knights is disputed, cf. Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, pp. 276–77.

⁷³ Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, pp. 83–96.

⁷⁴ The term *preudfemme*, while less frequently used in medieval literature, is a contemporary parallel construction to *preudome*, Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, p. 83.

⁷⁵ Blythe, ‘Women in the Military’.

ideal as purported in didactic writing, and fighting women were often described — sometimes approvingly — as manly.⁷⁶ However, given that chivalry encompassed much more than military prowess, there was a place for the ideal woman in chivalric society: her characteristics inspired the men with whom she was associated, and thus she played a role in chivalric society as a muse and source of courtly joy, as a moral model and civilizing force, and finally as a model of virtue and piety.⁷⁷ This balance of virtue and joy was not easily achieved and the tension between these conflicting requirements characterizes much of the advice given to women in didactic literature. Female ideals were sanctioned from the perspective of male chivalric society.

Women as well as men were taught good conduct to ‘sarez [a] Dieu et au siegle plus chier’ (be dear to God and the World),⁷⁸ while women in courtly society also had to provide ‘par sa cortoisie | solaz et bele companie [...] soit chevalier ou franc serjanz’ (with their courtesy solace and good company to knights and men of arms).⁷⁹ Woman should behave appropriately and gain a good reputation and they, too, had to care for their eternal soul and hope for salvation after their death. Their starting position, and therefore the desired result of immaculate conduct and virtue, were different: being perceived as inherently more sinful and deficient, women had hardly anything to win and everything to lose.⁸⁰ However, the main enemy of chivalry was sin, as Thomasin describes it, and as inherently sinful creatures women could adhere to the chivalric model by counteracting their own vices. The ideal woman has overcome her faulty nature and become a paragon of virtue. While courtly romances from the twelfth century onwards depicted women as models of chastity, virtue, and refined manners, didactic literature assumes overwhelmingly that they were in need of chastising and possibly surveillance. Virtuous women existed in these texts, but they were singled out as not only exemplary but extraordinary.⁸¹

In *Diu Winsbeckin*, a mother teaches her daughter about the ideal to which she should conform. A noblewoman who knew how to play her part

76 Cooper, ‘The Bride of Christ’.

77 Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry*, p. 71; see also Santina, *The Tournament and Literature*, pp. 91–106; Edgington and Lambert, eds, *Gendering the Crusades*; Hay, ‘The Campaigns of Countess Matilda of Canossa’.

78 Robert de Blois, *Chastoiement des Dames*, ed. by Fox, ll. 6–7.

79 Robert de Blois, *Chastoiement des Dames*, ed. by Fox, ll. 29–32.

80 Bloch, ‘Medieval Misogyny’. For examples see Blamires, Pratt, and Marx, ed., *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*.

81 Étienne de Fougeres singles out Cecily of Hereford as a prime example of a good woman (*Le Livre des manières*, l. 1205). Thomasin refers to fictional female characters — Andromaches, Ênit, Pénélope Oenoné, Galjênâ, Blanscheflôr, Sôrdâmôr — as literary models for women (*Der Welsche Gast*, ll. 1032–40).

in noble society would also be called *wert* (worthy, the German equivalent of *preux*). The mother–daughter dialogue leads the female disciple through the conflicting notions of being both chaste and an object of male desire. The set-up of an older woman, well-versed in courtly society, and a young girl, just on the verge of adolescence, makes for an insightful piece on female roles.

The texts begin with the basic rules on good behaviour that communicate a young woman's inner quality to the world. The example used is the female gaze, which must be tamed and controlled lest it be interpreted by (male) observers as a lack of temperance and discipline if it strays too much. The daughter initially agrees with everything and even elaborates on her mother's rules, until the older woman, intending to praise her, tells her that soon, many a man will surely desire her for her virtuous character. This prospect initially seems offensive to the daughter, who has been brought up learning that any male attention could compromise her reputation. In a vivid exchange, the girl learns about the concept of love in courtly society and her role in it. It is made very clear that the value of the girl depends on the kind of male attention she is able to attract: 'If you are desired, you are worthy'. However, she can react to male advances only by rejecting them as nicely as possible.⁸² The girl is confused by these contradicting requirements and it takes many reassuring words for the mother to convince the girl to accept her new role in noble society, which she clearly perceives as being at odds with her previous role in which she was supposed to be chaste and discreet.

In the course of the poem, the girl transitions from chaste child to object of desire, a courtly lady. During this transition, the daughter refuses to take responsibility for her actions as her mother initiates her into the consequences of being an object of male desire. She asks her mother to control and discipline her as she does not trust her capacity to react appropriately in this new role. This leads the mother to share with her and the readers/listeners a debate that was widely held among clerics, and probably secular elites at the time. It concerns the question of how much a man should control his wife to ensure her loyalty. By the twelfth century, the consensus seems to be that too much control is not beneficial for the moral quality of a woman. While Étienne de Fougères argues that a woman locked up to ensure her chastity would still find ways to meet her lover (st. 267–69); the Italian Thomasin of Zerklare reaches the same conclusion through a more nuanced consideration. In his opinion, an immoral woman cannot really be controlled as she will always find a way to follow her corrupt tendencies, while a virtuous woman could actually be turned away

82 'zuhtlich versagen' and 'sinneclich gewern'; *Diu Winsbeckin*, in *Winsbeckische Gedichte*, ed. by Leitzmann, trans. by Rasmussen and Trokhimenko, st. 20, 5–6.

from good behaviour if she is controlled too much.⁸³ Instead, women should be trained to seek moral guidance willingly, as Louis IX expects from his daughter in his admonitory letter.⁸⁴ The mother in the *Winsbeckin* argues in a similar way. Control is only suitable for an ill-minded woman, while virtuous women must experience too much control as disagreeable. She must act out of a positive attitude to virtuousness and embrace it willingly. This attitude is precisely what the mother teaches her daughter in the poem. After her initial resistance, the daughter understands that it is not obedience but an active embracing of her role that will allow her to be perceived as pleasant. In gaining herself a reputation as a worthy object of love, she will fulfil her role in noble society. Accordingly, she is now eager to learn everything there is about the nature of love, which previously she so vehemently rejected as a threat to her honour. By her willing embrace of her rule, she will continue to appear joyful. The constraints of her role are not supposed to show. Ideally, a young woman combines beauty and disciplined conduct.⁸⁵ This cannot be achieved by force, but by virtue, i.e. that continuous habit of appropriate behaviour that becomes her second nature.⁸⁶

The conduct of the ideal woman communicates her chastity to the world so that her reputation remains unblemished, and she does not lose her appeal to those men she must aim to attract.⁸⁷ At the same time, she must appear pleasant and accessible. However, didactic authors are aware that the advances of men can tarnish her reputation, so men are urged by authors more sensitive to the female situation to keep their admiration secret. *Der heimliche Bote* suggests that his female reader should stay away from a man 'dez minnen sint niet heimlich' (whose love is not secret; l. 17). Similarly, *Der Winsbecke* recommends that his son keep secret his love to avoid gossip (st.9). The later version of the Anglo-Norman *Urbain le Courtois* addresses a young man who has already reached a position where he could exercise some influence at the court, where he would interact with noble ladies. Women occur only as potential love interests, and the young man is urged to refrain from boasting about it or

83 Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, ll. 4049–62. Cf. the discussion on female resistance to excessive male control in Trokhimenko, 'Questioning the Rod'.

84 *The French Enseignement*, ed. by O'Connell, trans. by Ashley: Et soiés de tel maniere par quoi vostre confessours et vostre autre ami vous osent hardiement ensigner et reprendre. (And be of such a demeanour that your confessor and your other friends dare to boldly teach and reprimand you.)

85 'gar ist verlorn des wibes schöne, sin werde geziert mit zülte krône' (A woman's beauty is lost when it is not decorated by the crown of good conduct). Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 887–88.

86 Shifts in the way moral philosophy evaluated the role of habit are discussed in the Introduction.

87 See the discussion of female conduct in Chapter 3.

in any way attracting a noblewoman's disdain.⁸⁸ Apart from the constraint about boasting, sexual misconduct (or even just the suggestion of it) was problematic mainly for women. Ideally, chivalric women managed the balancing act between being object of desire, and thus incentive to chivalric deeds, and at the same time being chaste and virtuous so as not to compromise their own reputation, and by extension that of their male guardian.

Chivalry was, in practice, an aristocratic ideal, based on the display of virtue for the purpose of self-representation in a noble class, and available to all its members. As such, women had a place within it and could support chivalric culture by balancing joy with virtue, its main component. Its military aspect emphasizes its ties to male nobility, but other aspects of service — especially divine service — can serve to express the excellence of the class that performs it. Therefore, it is equally open to noblewomen and the high clergy as it is to lower nobles, kings, and emperors. Adhering to the chivalric ideal put certain constraints on medieval nobility but also provided them with modes of representation that excluded lower ranks and justified their elevated position in society.

Nobility in the Order of the World

According to Kautsky, aristocratic ideals were tied to the function this class fulfilled in society. The more one approached the ideal the better one was supposedly able to fulfil this function.⁸⁹ A closer look into didactic literature shows that the connection between ideals and functions was more complex than this unilateral explanation suggests, and virtue played a crucial role in this interplay.

The Function of Nobility in Medieval Society

As we have seen, chivalry provided an inclusive ideal to which men from all ranks of the elites could subscribe, including sometimes clerics.⁹⁰ Mostly, however, it could be used as a means of representation while at the same time including a promise of divine favour and a justification for a worldly lifestyle. It worked for such a broad range of social ranks within nobility because it helped define their functions in the order of medieval society. These functions originated in the duties of the ideal ruler, rooted in both Stoic philosophy and Christian ethics, but also drew on the

⁸⁸ Later *Urbain le Courtois*, ed. by Parsons, ll. 99–130.

⁸⁹ Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires*, p. 169.

⁹⁰ Mortensen, *Meritocratic Values*, pp. 6–7.

military function of the Germanic *reges*.⁹¹ In the Germanic *Heerkönigtum*, the dynasties from which the kings were born were already associated with the divine, and in the Carolingian period the kings became God's representatives on earth and defenders of the Church. Kings became guarantors of peace and justice and were supposed to be examples of clemency and personal piety. The rise of the Mirrors for Princes genre in the same period is probably related to the function of kings and their princes as *ministri dei*, who rule in accordance with the divine plan.⁹² In the high medieval period, the notion that nobility fulfilled a special place in the divinely established social order had become widely accepted and many of the duties of kings were transferred to nobility as a whole. Moral-didactic writing in the vernaculars also engaged with these discourses and assigned their noble readership a place in the order of the world, which served both to restrict their power and to provide them with a justification of their status.

The role of nobility in the divine order of the world is expressed most explicitly in those texts whose authors we know to be clerics. While Thomasin von Zerclaere and Étienne de Fougères both raise critical voices against the lives noble people live, they do not reject the legitimacy of their elevated position in society. Rather, they emphasize their responsibilities and the hardships of their rank and, for this reason, make concessions regarding life in the world and the requirements of a certain lavish representation they entail.

The *Livre*, being a *sermon ad status* in form, structures the author's advice hierarchically from the kings and princes, through the clerical ranks, to knights, and then to peasants, adding merchants and women almost as an afterthought. Étienne teaches mostly *ex negativo*, but nonetheless formulates some basic regal tasks that apply to high nobility too. First and foremost, the king must grant peace within his realm and outside of it. To do this, he must also restrain his desire to expand his territory.⁹³ In order to ensure justice in his realm, he must be constantly available and should not spend time on leisurely pursuits: he has to envy his subjects for their

91 Antonin, *The Ideal Ruler*, p. 9.

92 Antonin, *The Ideal Ruler*, p. 10.

93 'Reis deit amer peiz et concorde, | jugement o misericorde; | celui deit pendre o une corde | qui porchace guerre ou discorde' (The king must love peace and harmony, good judgement and compassion; he who provokes war and discord must hand from a rope), *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, ll. 89–92; 'N'eit pas envie de autrui terre | esgauginier ne a tort conquerre, | quar por itant mout sovent guerre | qui gent essille et gent enterre' (He should not have any intention to appropriate or conquer another's land, because this frequently leads to war which drives out and kills people); Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, ll. 93–96.

privilege of going hunting.⁹⁴ According to Étienne, the king does not even belong to himself: the king is not his own, but he belongs to all.⁹⁵

Thomasin, too, emphasizes the burden of noble duties. The people have an easier life than the lord, who must constantly work to ensure that all public affairs are well ordered:

swenn das volc slafen mac, | so rit der herre durch den tac | umb ir
aler dinc gemaine. | Swaz dem volke wirret muoz er eine | umbe haben
sorge und arbeit.

(When the people can sleep the lord rides through the day, caring about public things. What worries the people he alone must have worries and trouble about. *Der welsche Gast*, ll. 3083–87).

The lord is presented as the person in charge of all worries his people may have. There is no mention of any advantages he has from his office, only manifold duties. Just like Étienne, Thomasin describe the careless life of the people as a stark contrast to the many responsibilities of the nobility and the self-sacrifice their position demands.⁹⁶ A lord must defend the people from *vinde* and *diep* (enemies and thieves), and he takes the blame if anything bad happens to his people.⁹⁷ In this characterization, lordship is mostly duty and responsibility for the wellbeing of the people. This is Thomasin's legitimation for the very existence of lordship and their elevated position: 'den herren unser herre vrist | dem er hât gegeben den muot | daz er sô tugentlîchen tuot' (Our lord has formerly given to the lords such mind that they would do this virtuously).⁹⁸ The noble mindset of the lords ensures that they would take care of their people with all virtue, and live up to the high responsibility and endure the hardships of their position.

94 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas: 'Cil qui le mont deit justisier | ne deit mie tant boscheier : | ses sers i deit bien enveier | et il pent dou pople avoir' (The one who must judge the world must not run though the woods like this; he must envy his servants for it and he must govern the people); ll. 73–76; 'A chascun doit rendre reissin | et dreit tenir sanz acheison, | et deit estre en tote seison | apelables a sa messon' (To each he must make good judgement and hold the law without motive and he must in any season be available at his house); ll. 77–80.

95 'Reis n'est pas son, ainz est a toz', Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, ll. 161–62.

96 The 'people' are described as sleeping, playing with their children, and talking among themselves about all the things their lord should do, while the latter has to cope with all sorts of complaints, advice, and duties; Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 3111–34.

97 Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, ll. 3088–90.

98 Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, ll. 3094–97.

Even though authors list a variety of tasks that are exclusively the realm of the highest in society as the heads of state, their main task is to lead by example:

an den vürsten und an den herren: | von den schint guot bild von
verren. | tuon ich unreht, deist mîn eine: | der vürsten sünde diust
gemeine.

(The good example of the princes and lords is widely visible. If I do wrong, it's all my fault; the faults of princes are shared by all.)⁹⁹

Étienne supports the same claim with a biblical quote: 'Et ce redit Ecclesiaste | que reis deit estre nez et chaste, | quar li poples cort a grant haste | a vice dom li prince taste' (And this says Ecclesiastes that the king must be good and chaste because the people hurry in a great haste toward the vices that the princes commit).¹⁰⁰ The king and the dukes have a didactic function, due to their representative position, but they are also responsible for the common good and therefore more obliged to act virtuously.¹⁰¹

The common good was the subject of much political thought in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,¹⁰² emphasizing the great relevance duty had in the self-perception of the medieval elites, clerics and laity alike. By the end of the thirteenth century, it became a central point of Giles of Rome's treatise *De regimine principum*. Possibly commissioned by the future Philip III of France, it naturally focuses on the function of the monarchy in his engagement with the Aristotelian types of good government. The common good is best guaranteed in a monarchy in which the king is virtuous.¹⁰³ Just as a teacher must be virtuous in order to guide his pupils to virtue, so must the king be an example to his subjects to teach them to live a good life. Apart from this didactic function, the king's virtue enables him to pursue the common good, which must always have precedence over the individual good and will, in the end, also result in benefits for the king himself. Kingship is, however, public by nature, so that it must always focus on the function it serves in society.¹⁰⁴

99 Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 1717–20.

100 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, ll. 145–48; see also: 'Rele et esxample est dux et reis | aus chevaliers et aus borzeis, | et aus vilains et aus corteis: | lors feiz lor sunt preceiz et leis'; (Rule and example are king and dukes to the knights and the burghers, to the boorish and the courtly: their acts are precept and law to them); ll. 149–52.

101 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, ll. 165–68: 'Si de bien vout avoir reison | a toz sera, ni n'iert pas son; | obleir deit tot son bon | por le comun, s'il est prodom' (If he wants to have a good reputation, he should be for all, not for himself; he must forget all about his own good for the common [good], if he is a noble man).

102 Kempshall, *The Common Good*, pp. 2–3.

103 Giles of Rome, *De regimine principum*, ed. by Bevilacqua, III. II. 3.

104 Kempshall, *The Common Good*, pp. 139–40.

If nobility does not serve a function, if it does not lead by virtue, it loses its justification. Thomasin even exposes it as a social construct, as opposed to a natural *guot*:

waer hêrschaft guot in ir natûre, | si taet daz ieglich crêatûre | von ir selbr natûre tuot: | swaz in der werlde ist hie guot | das sol ouch guot sîn anderswa.

(If lordship was good in its nature, it would do as every creature does according to their nature. Everything in the world which is good here must also be good elsewhere.)¹⁰⁵

He argues that ‘rightfully good’ are things which are good by their very nature, and thus they must be universal. Good by nature must mean that a thing applies to all creation and in all places and times, which is not the case with lordship. He gives an example:

Wan ob dem herren geschicht | ze varen in ein ander lant, | dâ er lihte ist unerkant. | ich sagiu daz da also vil | uf in iemen ahten wil | als uf einn der in dem lant | ist ouch lihte unerkannt. | ja hat sa niht diu herschaft | von ir selber so vil kraft | daz si uns zeig wer si der herre | er si uns nâhen oder verre.

(If it happens to a lord that he travels to another country, where he is perhaps anonymous, I tell you that much, someone will respect him like anyone who is unknown in this country. So lordship does not have in itself so much power that it shows us who the lord is, if he is close to us or far away.)¹⁰⁶

If lordship depends on the people recognizing the person who carries it, it cannot be universal. If it were a natural category, it would be valid independent of people’s acceptance. What gives it legitimacy and makes it recognizable is the performance of duties and the practice of virtue.

As we can see, the more physical tasks of military defence are not very prominent; instead, the focus is on peace. Fighting enemies becomes the purview of the knights, even if, as we have seen, this group could include kings and dukes, too. It is now their task to protect widows and orphans, the poor and the Church, a duty originally associated with kings which has now been absorbed by the chivalric ideal.¹⁰⁷ With the inclusion of

105 Thomasin von Zerclaere, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 3173–77.

106 Thomasin von Zerclaere, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 3182–92.

107 Thomasin von Zerclaere, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 7801–05: ‘Wil ein riter phlegen wol | des er von rehte phlegen sol, | sô sol er tac unde naht | arbeiten nâch siner maht | durch kirchen und durch arme liute’ (If a knight wants to act rightfully, he should strive day and knight to work for the good of the church and poor

knighthood into the *militia Christi*, the Church claimed the right to control the use of violence and identify the enemy.¹⁰⁸ A poignant definition of the respective tasks of knights and clerics has been provided by Étienne de Fougères. To him, all *franc hom* (free men, l. 148) below the rank of king or duke are subsumed under the name *chevalier*, and they are the executive arm of the clerics who decide whom they are to persecute:

Quant li clerc li larron enfierge | d'esconmunge o livre et o cierge, | au
chevalier conmant qu'il fierge | et le meite en chartre tenierge.

(When the cleric binds the thief in excommunication, by book and candle, he orders the knight to strike and throw him in the darkest prison.)¹⁰⁹

Other authors use less restrictive phrasing and emphasize that knights are mainly supposed to fight the Church's enemies, rather than their own. As the 'two swords' in the *Livre des manières* (*du glaive*, l. 653), ecclesiastics and noble knights share responsibility for the wellbeing of the Church, as Robert de Blois sees it:¹¹⁰

Quant Dex Sainte Yglise sacra | Dous bones gardes li dona; | se furent
cler et chevalier; | Les clers por la loi ensoignier | Et en Sainte Yglise
servir; | le chevaliers por garantir | C'on ne li feïst nul outraige. | Et de
se doivent estre saige | Tuit chevalier, por quoi espee | Lor fut a porter
commandee.

(When God has given the Holy Church two good guards; these were clerics and knights: the clerics to teach the law and to serve the Holy Church and the knights to guarantee that no one committed any crimes against it. Therefore, all knights must be wise, for this it was commanded that they carry a sword.)¹¹¹

His hermeneutics of the knightly equipment and armour balances the interpretation of these items as signifying moral qualities with their impor-

people). Widows and orphans were under special protection of the Church and their lords due to their status as *personae miserales*: Shahar, *The Fourth Estate*, p. 94. The oath spoken during the *adoubement* included also specifically the protection of the meek: Keen, *Chivalry*, p. 57.

108 The concept of *militia Christi* was not necessarily interpreted in the same way by all who subscribed to it. Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*, pp. 79–93 lists a number of examples in which the notion was used to suit the individual interests of a nobleman.

109 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, st. 166.

110 With reference to Luke 22, 38, the theory of the two swords was formulated in 494 by Pope Gelasius I and later used by preachers such as Bernard of Clairvaux to describe the relation between secular and ecclesiastical power. Goez, 'Zwei-Schwerter-Lehre', cols 725–26.

111 Robert de Blois, *Enseignement des Princes*, ed. by Fox, ll. 33–42.

tance as signs of power. Knights warrant respect because they perform a function that cannot be fulfilled by the religious orders:

Ore i a une gent ki, par fin estovoir, | Lor couvient il au siecle et tenir et manoir, | Les chevaus et les armes et les castiaus avoir. | Pour bien tenir justiche mout i pueent valoir: | Nous ne poons tout estre blanc moine ne noir.

(Now there are people to whom, though necessity, it is appropriate to live and remain in the world, to have horses, weapons and castles. They can be of great service to dispense justice: We cannot all be black or white monks.)¹¹²

The argument that certain functions in society cannot be fulfilled while leading a life focused on prayer serves less clerically-minded authors as a justification for the extravagances of this class. The *Doctrinal* argues:

Or me dites, pour Diu, se tout nous adrechons | As freres des cordeles ne as autres maisons, | Qui nous deffenderoit des sarrasins felons | Ne ki tenroit justiche des murdreurs, des larrons? | Bien pueent li haut houte tenir lor fors doignons, | Lor enfans et lor femes et lor bons compaignons, | Et tenir beles cours et douner riches dons | Et doivent abaubir les robeurs, les gloutons.

(Now tell me, by God, if we all joined the Franciscans or other orders, who would defend us against the evil Saracens and who will dispense justice against murderers and thieves? May the nobles keep their mighty castles, their children and wives and their good company and hold pretty courts and give rich gifts, as long as they drive away robbers and gluttons.)¹¹³

These lines sound like an ironic retort to clerical admonitions to withdraw from a worldly life, such as expressed in *Der Winsbecke*.¹¹⁴ Reference to the dangers posed by Saracens and heretics legitimized the fighting class in a manner that was not only accepted but promoted by ecclesiastical authorities. The *Doctrinal* emphasizes the importance of the nobility for the security of the Church as well as the safety of the people and thus underlines their function, which goes hand in hand with their lifestyle. As long as they hear mass and repent their sins — in short: submit to the Christian faith — they should be free to enjoy their worldly pursuits. These words end the *Doctrinal* and thus offer a fundamental justification to the lives of its noble audience.

¹¹² *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, st. LII.

¹¹³ *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, st. LIII.

¹¹⁴ Kern, *Weltflucht*, pp. 27–30.

It famously takes those who pray, those who rule and fight, and those who work the earth to guarantee a functioning society. 'Li clerc deivent por toz orer, | li chevalier sanz demorer | deivent defendre et ennorer, | et li paisant laborer' (Clerics pray for all, knights must fight and honour without hesitation and the peasants work).¹¹⁵ Étienne concedes the function that peasants have, but he is rather contemptuous in his treatment of their class. These lines have often been quoted as an example of the tripartite model of medieval society that prevailed since Lambert of Hersfeld proposed it in the eleventh century. In reality, not only did many other models exist, but Étienne's work, too, adheres to another philosophy. While he mentions peasants, burghers, and craftsmen after covering the secular and ecclesiastical elites, there is a clear notion of 'us' and 'them' in his work: while the peasants have all the hard labour, it is *nos en avon le meilleur grein* (us who have the best grain).¹¹⁶ In medieval society there are, from an aristocratic point of view, only two groups: those who work, and those who have land and natural virtues.

The Place of Women in Aristocratic Society

In this order of the world, noblewomen had a place that included but also exceeded that stipulated by the ideal of the virtuous woman. Setting up the rules for female morality and desired conduct, didactic authors refer to a framework within which women were meant to act. While their spheres of agency were much more limited than that of their male contemporaries, they played an important part in aristocratic society beyond the marriage-partner role older research often assigns to them.¹¹⁷

Interestingly, the legal differences that existed between the different regions in north-western Europe rarely show up in their respective didactic literatures. What women were able to do in their socio-political contexts was not what they were meant to do from the perspective of the authors that taught them in morality and good conduct. In France, women could occasionally succeed their fathers in lordship, and they paid homage and ruled estates in their own right.¹¹⁸ In England, we find them governing their dowry lands during their marriages and co-signing their husbands' ordinances.¹¹⁹ In the Empire, female succession was not legally possible.

115 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, st. 169.

116 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, st. 173.

117 See, for example, Duby, *Le Chevalier, la Femme et le Prêtre*.

118 Jewell, *Women in Late Medieval and Reformation Europe*, p. 100. On France, cf. Poulet, 'Capetian Women and the Regency'.

119 For instance, Isabel, the wife of William Marshal, was significantly involved in almost all political proceedings and held considerable political agency, including power over her own lands, by consent of her husband. Full control of her lands only came in widowhood, with

However, women did rule on behalf of their underage sons just like in other Western European kingdoms, and they could wield substantial power in the absence of their husbands.¹²⁰ None of these aspects of female agency is referenced in didactic writers' discussion of the female role in aristocratic society, however, though admittedly they are rarely mentioned for males either. Moral education is much more concerned with the way men and women are supposed to act *within* the positions they occupied in their respective social frameworks. In order for them to act according to their roles, they must be trained in morality and good conduct.

The social roles that are explicitly mentioned in these texts are those of daughter, mother, and wife. We know that widowhood could be a moment of greater agency in medieval noblewomen's lives, but no specific teaching is transmitted for it. This is likely because a woman's social role in moral teaching is predominantly discussed in relation to the men with whom they were associated — fathers and husbands — or in the context of the male-dominated courtly society in which they could fulfil specific functions.

As we have seen, young women were meant to be pleasing and virtuous at the same time. This ideal referred to the two different functions they could perform in society: representation of honour and nobility, and continuity of the noble lineage. In a passage on the conduct of young men and women, Thomasin details their tasks when the house is hosting guests: 'Bède vrouwen unde herren sulen vrömede liute êren' (Both men and women are supposed to honour strangers).¹²¹ It is specifically the young women who are to represent the household and honour its guests:

Ein vrouwe sol sich sehen lân, | kumt zir ein vrömeder man. | swelihiu
sich niht sehen lâ, | diu sol ûz ir kemenât | sîn allenthalben unerkant; |
büeze alsô, sî ungenant.

(A woman must let herself be seen when a strange man visits her.
The one who does not let herself be seen shall outside of her
chamber be unknown everywhere; she will atone for it and remain
unnamed.)¹²²

In the interaction with strangers, women need to manage yet another balancing act. They are encouraged to be seen and to decorate the courtly

also apparently the control of her eldest son's marriage; Crouch, 'Testament and Inheritance', pp. 26–50.

¹²⁰ Pernoud, *La Femme au temps des croisades*, p. 7. Zey, 'Mächtige Frauen?' offers an overview of scholarship on princely and royal women in Europe.

¹²¹ Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 377–78.

¹²² Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 391–96.

society with their beauty, but not to behave haughtily, show too much of their bodies, or look too closely at men.¹²³ David Crouch has emphasized how difficult it was for women to behave appropriately in social situations, as they had to be kind and confident while at the same time careful not to encourage any unwanted advances. As *Diu Winsbeckin* teaches, a girl was supposed to attract attention and then politely reject it.¹²⁴ While too much intelligence is not encouraged in women, they need some learning and understanding to avoid such traps, explains Thomasin:

der edelen vrouwen zuht wil | daz ein vrouwe hab niht vil list, | diu
biderbe unde edel ist: | einvalt stêt den vrouwen wol. | doch ist reht
daz ein vrouwe sol | haben die lêre und die sinne | daz si sich hûete vor
unminne.

(Discipline of noble women requires that a woman who is good and noble may not have much cleverness; simplicity suits them well. However, it is rightful that a woman should have enough education and understanding that she should guard herself from ignoble love.)¹²⁵

Withdrawing from social interactions in order to avoid misinterpretation of the girl's behaviour was no alternative. Women had a function in the representation of courtly joy. They took part in the usual modes of interaction at court, such as gift-giving. The later *Urbain le Courtois* lists gifts appropriate for noblewomen that agrees in scale and function to the one Thomasin draws up: women are to be gifted with items to decorate their beauty.¹²⁶ Larger gifts, however, must not be accepted by women as they might encourage wrong ideas in the man who gave them.¹²⁷ The presence of women could be central to courtly representation, as in the case of the tournament. The female spectators and participants in the activities were

123 Examples of advice for female beauty in Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, pp. 91–92. Just how much of themselves women were to show was disputed; see the discussion in Chapter 3.

124 'zühtlich versagen or sinneclich gewern' (modestly reject or sensibly allow); *Diu Winsbeckin*, in *Winsbeckische Gedichte*, ed. by Leitzmann, 20,5–6.

125 Thomasin von Zerklære, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 846–52.

126 The later *Urbain le Courtois* lists clasps, silk belts and rings for women; bracelets and buckles for girls (ll. 171–74); *Der Welsche Gast*: 'hantschuoch, spiegel, vingerlin, vürspangel, schapel, blüemelin' (gloves, mirrors, rings, clasps, bonnets, flowers), ll. 1340–41.

127 Thomasin von Zerklære, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, ll. 1345–49: 'so erloube ich ir dan daz si sol / nemen mêre und niht sô vil, | sin erzeige wol daz si wil | daz ir der vriunt si vür daz guot, | wan anders hiet si valschen muot'.

meant to encourage chivalric deeds and are reported to have an influence on male conduct on such occasions, too.¹²⁸

Virtuous ladies in didactic literature are presented as exercising a civilizing force on the men. A chivalric woman could, according to the didactic writers, contribute to the joy of the court and offer an incentive for knights to perform chivalric deeds.¹²⁹ Therefore, she must be pleasant to look at, beautiful and cheerful.¹³⁰ *Der Winsbecke* promises his son not only the regard of renowned men, but that of noblewomen, too. A long passage is dedicated to the praise of virtuous women in courtly society and how important it is for a young man to seek their approval. In their idealized potential, virtuous women serve as the same moral authorities as the men of the highest reputation.

Sun wildu erzenie nemen | ich wil dich leren ein getranch | lat dirz frau
sæld wol gezemen | du wirdest selten tugend cranch | din leben si curz
oder ez si lanch | leg in din herz ein | reinez wip mit stæter lieb sunder
wanch | ist ez an werdikeit verzagt | als der triack daz aiter tuot | ir
wiplich guet dirz veriagt.

(Son, in case you need medicine, I will tell you about a potion. If providence provides it, then you will never lack virtue whether your life be short or long. With steadfast, unchanging love, take a chaste woman into your heart; and if it despairs of virtue, just as an antidote drives out poison, her womanly goodness will chase away your doubts.)¹³¹

Thomasin, too, discourages behaviour in men that might cause them to lose the favour of women.¹³² The 'civilizing' influence of women was a staple in courtly literature, and didactic authors certainly allude to it. Bumke and other writers since have refuted the ennobling influence of medieval women on enamoured lower-ranking knights in the reality of the

128 *History of William Marshal*, ed. by Holden, ll. 3455–70 describes how the greeting of beautiful countess made all men in a tourneying company feel as if they were better and braver.

129 *Der Winsbecke*, in *Winsbeckische Gedichte*, ed. by Leitzmann, trans. by Rasmussen and Trokhimenko, st. 12: 'Sun si sint wunne ein berndez lieht | an eren und an werdikeit | der werlt an frauden zuo versiht' (Son, women's virtue and dignity are a continually renewing source of delight and the world's hope for joy).

130 Trokhimenko, *Constructing Virtue and Vice*, p. 34.

131 *Der Winsbecke*, in *Winsbeckische Gedichte*, ed. by Leitzmann, trans. by Rasmussen and Trokhimenko, st. 14.

132 'er sol haben dise lère | daz er ir gruoz und gar ir hulde | nien verlies von siner schulde' (He shall learn this, that he must not lose their greetings and their grace by his own fault). Thomasin von Zerclaere, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 1540–43.

court, and rightly so.¹³³ Authors of didactic literature, however, attribute to the women of the court some influence over the behaviour of their suitors. However, they do not refer to the literary model — there is no mention of status differences or the courting of a married lady by an unmarried knight. The interaction between (young) men and women must rather be imagined as part of the joys of courtly life, in which a woman's reputation was a central factor of her social capital and easily damaged by ill-bred admirers. In this context, unmarried women could probably exercise some influence on the behaviour of their suitors by bestowing their attention on those who behaved appropriately. It was therefore especially necessary for them to willingly embrace their assigned frame of agency and know precisely how to navigate their space.

Once married, the role of women in the distribution of courtly norms and values transfers to the sphere of child rearing. In the *Livre des manières*, the necessity to educate noble children well is addressed in the section on women. The influence of mothers on their children's upbringing and education could be a real asset and entail political implications over time. Walter Map describes Empress Matilda as instructing Henry II in good conduct, though Map clearly disapproves of her influence; there are similar descriptions of Adela of Blois and Blanche of Castile.¹³⁴ Likewise, Vincent of Beauvais tries to diminish the influence noblewomen had on the education of their children;¹³⁵ however in practice their role was evidently significant. His *De eruditione filiorum nobilium* was commissioned by Louis IX of France and his wife, Marguerite of Provence. Marguerite was herself much involved in the education of her children and Louis urges his son in a letter to trust her counsel and listen to her teaching.¹³⁶ The influence of women from the lower nobility on the education and conduct of their sons and daughters must have been even greater, given that tutors and teachers were less readily available and at least the earliest years were spent in the company of the women of the house.¹³⁷

The woman's place in noble society, according to Étienne, is to please and obey her husband, bear and care for their children, and engage in pious work while, at the same time, trying to refrain as much as possible from her natural vices. As limiting as this sounds, these three spheres could open considerable avenues of influence for noblewomen. Étienne, a Frenchman in long standing at the Angevin court of Henry II in England, must have known many examples of female rulership *suo jure*, such as Adela of Blois or Eleanor of Aquitaine. Perhaps the examples of these

133 Bumke, *Höfische Kultur*, p. 513.

134 Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, p. 87.

135 Jacobs-Pollez, 'The Role of the Mother'.

136 *The Teachings of Saint Louis*, ed. by David O'Connell, pp. 55–60.

137 Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry* and Shahar, *Childhood*, pp. 166–67.

powerful women urged him to advertise obedience and delineate all the more clearly the spheres of influence to which women should restrict themselves.

As they became wives, women's spheres of influence shifted, but did not necessarily diminish. In a new household, they fulfilled different functions. Étienne de Fougères treats different social groups and their failures and desired conduct, and lists women as the last category, where he includes only noblewomen since they are, according to his reasoning, more likely to misbehave due to the greater influence they have on male behaviour.¹³⁸ Though Étienne does not seem to appreciate such influence and is much more concerned with the sexual (mis-)conduct of women, he does concede that, ideally, wives could be valuable advisors in male affairs — he indirectly grants the wife a supporting role in decision making when he says in the *Livre des manières*: 'A good wife is a good thing, she does not rest from doing good things, she honours him in speaking well, she knows how to counsel and act well'¹³⁹ and that such a wife 'is an adornment to her lord when she loves him and serves well and counsels him truthfully'.

In fact, women's influence on their husbands' decisions could be significant. Queen Margaret of France, who married Edward I in September 1299, was a very successful intercessor and mediated on several occasions between her stepson and his father.¹⁴⁰ Isabelle de Clare, wife of the famous knight William Marshal, was apparently closely involved in his political decisions from the day of her marriage. We find her as his advisor, as intercessor in conflicts with his sons and other nobles, and as co-executor of his acts. As if to counter his concession to female influence, Étienne emphasizes several times that wives needed most of all to be obedient to their husbands. Indeed, it has been found that clearly demonstrating submission to the authority of their king enabled queens to act as intercessor. This demonstration of vulnerability allowed the king to grant his queen influence over his decisions that could be interpreted as weakness if granted to anyone else. Philippa of Hainault, interceding on behalf of her husband Edward III while heavily pregnant and demonstratively submissive, was successful and her actions allowed Edward to keep his face. However, political agency that lacked such submission could be sanctioned heavily, both by the husband (the example of Eleanor of Aquitaine springs to

138 'Les contesses et les reines | funt asez peis que les meschines, | quar d'iloc sordent les haines, | les meslees et les ravines' (The contesses and the queens have more influence than the servants, because over them hatred, fighting and robbery arise). Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, ll. 977–80.

139 'Bon fame est molt haute chose: | de bien feire pas ne repose, | de bien dire partot s'aloise, | bien conseilier et bien fere ose' and 'est ornement a son saignor [...] quant el l'aime et sert bonementet | et le conseilie veirement'. Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre de manières*, ed. by Thomas, ll. 1133–36 and 1161–64.

140 Benz, 'Conspiracy and Alienation', p. 120.

mind), but also by society, who would accuse such women of witchcraft, scheming, and disloyalty.¹⁴¹

Étienne's view of an ideal marriage, in which the spouses have a loving relationship and the woman obeys her husband, indicates that the female sphere of influence is not only a private and domestic one: her virtues and poise can increase the reputation of the husband and her entire family. His ideal of a wife, the countess of Hereford, is singled out as the paragon of virtue.¹⁴² Following the deaths of her children, she dedicates all her time and energy to pious foundations and generously equips monasteries and churches, gives alms, clothes the naked, and feeds the hungry. Because she loves her husband, her pious work does him also honour.¹⁴³ Similarly, King Louis IX reminds his daughter Isabelle that by obeying her husband she will not only contribute to the reputation of her marital family. The letter strongly implies that as a wife she is also an ambassador of her natal family. Louis' reminder of the pious line of kings from which she descends, and his very admonitory letter to her, emphasize that her own virtues feature into the reputation of the Capetian dynasty. In her devotion to God she must therefore be an example to all others. Wives represented their natal family in the lands of their husband and established a connection between the two families.

Women were patrons of religious institutions, too. In this function, they could showcase their own piety and at the same time take charge of the memory of their families, both natal and by marriage.¹⁴⁴ In the Empire, where female succession to rulership was not intended, the agency of noblewomen in the twelfth and thirteenth century was restricted, but we see considerable influence of women in religious and cultural matters. During the Church reforms of the eleventh century, imperial princesses played a major role in the distribution of the new values, many by convincing their families to subscribe to them, but also by encouraging their own religious foundations, as the Salian princess Judith did for the Welf dynasty; the daughter of Rudolf of Rheinfelden and Adelheid of Turin, also named Adelheid, probably advertised the reform movement at the court of the duchy of Swabia.¹⁴⁵ In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, princely and royal women seem to have lost political influence by compar-

141 For instance, Judith, wife of Louis the Pious, was rumoured to be an adulterer, sorcerer, and have incestuous relationships while acting as regent, Benz, 'Conspiracy and Alienation', p. 132.

142 Crouch, *The Chivalric Turn*, p. 91.

143 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, ll. 1221–22.

144 Ferrante, *To the Glory of Her Sex*; van Houts, *Gender and Memory*.

145 Goez, 'Mit den Mitteln einer Frau', pp. 317–24.

ison, though late medieval developments in administration and learned discourses partly rectified this situation.¹⁴⁶

Piety has long been viewed as a field in which noblewomen could excel without the influence of their male guardians, to the point that they could claim moral superiority in a society in which their inferior status was undisputed. Among the acts issued by noblewomen from the period we almost always (and sometimes exclusively) find donations to religious foundations, often associated with their families, both natal and marital.¹⁴⁷ Both Jeanne (1194–1244) and Marguerite II (1202–1280) of Flanders wielded significant political power partly through their patronage of religious institutions.¹⁴⁸ Piety did not only offer a possible way to evade marriage; married women could also resort to religiosity in order to gain some kind of space in a hostile social environment. The example of Elizabeth of Thüringen (1207–1231) demonstrates how great piety could also be regarded as an act of defiance against the courtly society and the superiority of a husband and lord. Elizabeth faced considerable opposition from courtiers and princely family alike, and after the death of her husband she chose to spend her last years in the habit of a Hospitaller nun. When faced with the choice to return to the Landgrave's court or remain a poor nun, she shunned the court in preference for her pious values.¹⁴⁹

Didactic authors agree that noblewomen should receive an education, contrary to other clerical voices that considered educated women a threat.¹⁵⁰ Vincent of Beauvais, in his *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, had argued that girls should be educated, mainly to read Scripture. Other than that, he thought that girls should mainly be instructed in modesty and such skills as prepared her for her role as a wife or a nun.¹⁵¹ Giles of Rome dedicated a section of his *De regimine principum* to the education of noble girls, though he required them to be taciturn.¹⁵² The role of education of noblewomen becomes evident when we consider another function that

146 Föbel, 'From the Consors Regni to the Koenigs Husfrouwe?'. On late medieval developments, cf. Hanley, *Les femmes dans l'histoire*; Hanley, 'Mapping Rulership'.

147 For example, Isabelle, Countess of Pembroke, cf. Mitchell, 'The Most Perfect Knight's Countess', p. 52. See also examples in Innes, 'Keeping it in the Family'.

148 Jordan, *Women, Power, and Religious Patronage*, pp. 61–86.

149 Werner, 'Elizabeth von Thüringen', pp. 109–11. Schreiner, 'Hof (curia) und höfische Lebensführung (vita curialis)', pp. 70–74. On her life, Barow-Vassilevitch, *Elisabeth von Thüringen*.

150 From Aristotle to Tertullian up to Peter of Blois and all the way to Philipp de Navarre, the list of authors who opposed female education is long; cf. Ferrante, 'The Education of Women in the Middle Ages', pp. 12–14.

151 Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione*, ed. by Steiner, pp. 176–77. Jacobs-Pollez, 'The Role of the Mother'; Barton, 'Vincent of Beauvais on the Education of Women'.

152 Giles of Rome, *De regimine principum*, ed. by Bevilacqua, p. 27. Vernacular authors, in their adaptations of Giles' work, have sometimes changed this perspective, cf. Perret, *Les traductions françaises*, pp. 297–304.

women fulfilled in aristocratic society — patrons of art and literature. In fact, some didactic writing was commissioned by women or copied for their use: Étienne himself had perhaps enjoyed the patronage of the countess of Hereford.

Women were thus integrated into the noble values system to a degree that they no longer needed to be controlled, but rather they controlled themselves. They perpetuated the normative pattern and taught it to the next generation. As they were the ones in charge of the early education of the noble offspring, they passed on the values they embodied themselves. As they could gain a certain degree of social security in their assigned roles, they were also much more likely to hold dear the values of the normative system. Thus they could even be installed as elements in courtly society as means through which courtly men could be controlled. In channelling their energy towards an ideal of romantic love and the service to the object of their desire, they could be prevented from less controllable, more violent expressions of their status.

Nobility and Virtue

Authors of didactic (and other) texts speak at length about the necessity of comporting oneself correctly, especially for powerful people and those who aimed for success at the courts. This knowledge is clearly imagined to be the result of education while at the same time it is a marker of nobility. *Unzuht* is called a *gebiurisch schande*, explains *Der Jüngling*, and ‘unzuht heizt unedelich.’¹⁵³ The *Moralium dogma philosophorum* and its vernacular translations emphasize that virtuousness is the responsibility of noble person, not just for their own reputation but also that of their ancestors to whom they owe the continuance of the line of virtue. However, in the late twelfth century the notion of nobility is questioned more explicitly than before, and some authors honour nobility by virtue higher than nobility by blood. *Der Winsbecke* explains, that

hoch geburt ist an dem man | und an dem wibe gar velorn | da wir niht
tugenden kiesen an [...] der tugende hat, derst wol geborn | und eret
sin geslehte wol. | ich han zu vriunde mir erkorn | den nidern baz, der
eren gert, | vür einen hohen sunder tugent | der hiure ist boeser danne
vert.

(high birth is completely lost on men and women in whom we cannot discern virtue. [...] Whoever has virtue is truly well born and honours his lineage fully. I would rather choose as my friend

153 Konrad von Haslau, *Der Jüngling*, ed. by Haupt, l. 44.

the lesser-born man who strives for honour than the high-born man who lacks virtue and who is worse this year than the last.)¹⁵⁴

These lines already point to the connection between lineage and virtues, but also to the possibility of a low-born man exceeding a nobleman through his virtues — though this case is clearly seen as a disruption of the right order.

Didactic authors tend to express rather conservative views. Their audiences need to learn the established ways in which to behave in courtly society: when they were of the lower ranks and attempted to fit in, questioning the established order would not be of great help. On the other hand, readers from among the highest nobility, and thus in positions of power, were probably more eager to embrace teaching that supported the hegemony of their class: the *Doctrinal Sauvage* justifies hunting and other courtly pursuits for the nobility because they brought them relief from their responsible functions in society.¹⁵⁵ Other texts, however, show the notion of virtue shine through independently of nobility — the way it is addressed, however, shows that the connection between the two was deeply rooted in high medieval thought, and more justification was needed for the other perspective.

From a clerical perspective, the connection is much more complex. *Der Welsche Gast* discusses the concept of nobility in a chapter on order and lists it as one of the *bonae fortunae*. These properties — Thomasin calls them *sehs dinc* (six items) — are outer qualities that can be attached to a person, as opposed to inner qualities he might possess. Nobility is the first quality: the others are wealth, reputation, power, lordship, and joy, i.e. a courtly lifestyle. They are the classical *adiaphora*, or *bonae fortunae*, ethically neutral concepts that to Thomasin carry potential dangers for the soul, and must therefore be connected to a virtuous mind.¹⁵⁶

The necessity to acquire fame and a good reputation, according to Thomasin, leads many noblemen to pretend to be virtuous, even by sinful means.¹⁵⁷ The reputation a man gains in the eyes of others (called *lop*, praise) is so important to him, that he does not care if he deserves it. All his deeds, bravery, representation, courtliness, and virtues (ll. 3547–48, 3649–50) aim at this, rather than aiming to please God, as the *biderbe herre*

154 *Der Winsbecke*, in *Winsbeckische Gedichte*, ed. by Leitzmann, trans. by Rasmussen and Trokhimenko, st. 28.

155 *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari, st. LIII–LIV.

156 Thomasin von Zerklare, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, ll. 5745–46: ich mein diu sehs dinc, adel, maht, | gelust, name, richtuom, herschaft. (I mean the six goods, nobility, power, desire, reputation, wealth, lordship). Schanze, *Tugendlehre*, p. 150.

157 'daz si werden namhaft. Si gebent dar umbe miht, ob dem ze liegen geschicht'. Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, ll. 3551–53.

should do.¹⁵⁸ In order to gain *ruom*, a man often does things that make him appear good, and instead of doing the good for virtuous reasons.

swaz von tugent niht komen ist, | daz ist untugent zaller vrist. | swelch man rehte tuot, | des sol dwingen sîn muot: | wan ob er werltlich ruom dwinget, | die tugent grôz untugent bringet.

(What does not come from virtue is always vice. When a man acts right, he must be impelled by his inner conviction, because if he struggles for praise in the world the virtue is a great vice.)¹⁵⁹

The endless competition for more and better reputation and honour, resulting in empty praise or *ruom*, leads men to pursue *tugent*, but not with a virtuous mindset.

daz adel uns alsam kan | machen troumen, swelich man | edeler danne ein ander ist, | er waent sîn tiuwer zaller vrist | unde triuget sich dar an: | niemen ist edel niwan der man | der sîn herze und sîn gemüte | hât gekêrt an rehte gûete.

(Nobility can make us all dream that a man is nobler than another, he considers himself more worthy all the time and is wrong about it: No one is more noble than the man who has his heart and mind directed towards the rightful good.)¹⁶⁰

These lines do not only indicate that noblemen constantly reflected on the hierarchy of their noble status and the sources it derived from. They also show Thomasin's clerical conviction that nobility must match with the *muot* (moral disposition) of the person: a noble person must also have a noble mindset.¹⁶¹ Noble birth becomes shameful when it does not meet a noble mind:

ist ein man wol geborn | und hât sîns muotes adel verlorn, | ich kan iu sagen wol vürwâr, | in schendet sîn geburt gar: | wan swer wol geborn ist | sîn geburt gert zaller vrist | daz er wol und rehte tuo. | ob er sich niht dwingt derzuo, | sô hât er danne lasters mêre: | sîn geburt minnert sîne êre.

(If a man is of high birth and he has lost the nobility of his mind, I can tell you truly that his birth is shame to him: Because who is

158 'wan ein biderbe man wil gerner durch got wesen guot dan durch ruom'. Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des manières*, ed. by Thomas, ll. 3666–67.

159 Thomasin von Zerclaere, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 3719–24.

160 Thomasin von Zerclaere, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 3855–62.

161 Cf. Zips, "Reht tuon daz ist hüfscheit".

high born, his birth requires at all times that he acts well and justly. If he does not urge himself to this, he has even more vices: His birth diminishes his honour.)¹⁶²

A noble man is born with a noble mindset, according to Thomas. It does not have to be acquired, only preserved. A person's noble birth entails the duty for moral excellence, reflected in his deeds. If he does not excel in this, if his deeds reflect a loss of his noble mind, the fact that he is of noble birth actually diminishes his reputation. A commoner acting in manner other than *wol* and *rehte*, it is implied here, only behaves as one would expect him to according to his status in society. However, the nobleman's duty and the legitimation of his exalted status is his moral superiority to the common people. The same judgement can be found in the *Livre des manières*, and the *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, which also states that noble birth adds to the shame of an unjust deed. While Thomasin explicitly says that among noble people the pursuit of honour is mostly achieved through honourable appearance, he adds to this the moral dimensions of a cleric. The outer appearance must reflect the inner stance, otherwise it is *lüge* (falsity). By nature, noble birth comes with a noble mind. Whoever loses this mindset acts against their nature.

It was obvious to Thomasin and other didactic writers that morality and good conduct needed to be taught and learned by a certain class of people. On the other hand, it was also agreed that certain people were more inclined to be virtuous than others. The twelfth century is also the moment in which historiographic works were commissioned and read by noble families to reassure themselves of their place in the order of the world — probably not only because of shifts in the social layout of society but also owing to this discussion about the justification of nobility. Continuity of lineage and morality of conduct served to legitimate the special place of the nobility in medieval society.¹⁶³

The *Livre des manières* established this connection between lineage and morality:

Franc hom, de franche mere nez, | s'a chevalier est ordenez, | pener se deit, s'il est senez, | qu'il ne seit vils ne degenez. | Proz et hardiz seit sagement | et d'oneste contennement; vers iglise et vers tote gent | se contienge afeiteiement.

(A free-born man, born from a noble mother, if he is ordained as a knight, and if he is wise, he must strive that he does not become evil or dishonourable. He must be brave and bold, with wisdom

¹⁶² Thomasin von Zerclaere, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, trans. by Gibbs and McConnell, ll. 3863–73.

¹⁶³ Wittig, 'Adliges Selbstverständnis'.

and honourable conduct; against the church and all people he must behave politely.)¹⁶⁴

The connection between nobility and virtue is a bilateral one. On the one hand, nobility is considered to be inherently more virtuous; on the other hand, the outward expressions of virtue, i.e. codified courtly conduct, were clearly imagined as something one had to learn. These texts existed for no other reason than to enable those who did not learn courtliness by immersion to learn it from books. Courtly conduct was a gatekeeper in that it kept those who did not know its subtleties out of polite society. The idea behind it was that those of noble origin would be inherently more moral than those in a lower social position. The argument was not always coherent but a long line of identifiable ancestors, ideally leading all the way back to a mythical or historical *Spitzenahn*, connecting the entire line to this figure's renown and ethical superiority — honour was accumulated.¹⁶⁵ At the same time, this complex connection leaves room for the notion of a nobility of the mind that was not dependent on noble birth. Real nobility, of course, meant that both sides of the family could look back to such distinguished ancestry, as unions within the same social class were taken as standard. While in the twelfth century agnatic descent became more dominant in matters of heritage, the creation of a noble lineage made use of whichever line provided the highest-ranking and most renowned family members.¹⁶⁶ When a baby was born to a noblewoman, her own spotless reputation provided the only real guarantee that the child's father was indeed the woman's husband, and that the child would continue the superior ancestral line and — consequently — inherent morality. The strong personal component of medieval rulership meant that those who derived from glorious lineages were likely not only to be morally superior but also to provide good government, as Étienne's analogy suggests.¹⁶⁷ Female transgression was therefore most feared when it was connected to her sexual conduct (ll. 1105–24). This applied not just to her capacity to interrupt the nobility of the line. Étienne is equally concerned about

164 Étienne de Fougères, *Le Livre de manières*, ed. by Thomas, st. 148–49.

165 Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*, chapter 11.

166 McDougall defines 'The Chivalric Family' as made up of people with a shared sense of not just paternal but also, or even primarily, maternal lineage. Their sense of family included not just blood relations but also marital kin. It reached back via ancestors on both sides to some celebrated ancestor or ancestors of legendary origins (or declared themselves of) royal or imperial stock. (p. 124).

167 Étienne de Fougères connects the behaviour of noblemen to their ancestry, comparing it to the innate behaviour of animals, *Le livre des maniers*, ed. by Thomas, ll. 1089–92: Se l'eir est malveis, il qu'en pout? | Qui de chaz est, surgier l'estout, | qui de poirs est el taier fout, | et cil rest bon qui de bons mout. (If the heir is bad, what can he do? Whoever comes from cats, hunts mice; who comes from pigs digs in the mud, and he remains good who descends from good people).

female homosexuality, which he clearly considers a way of undermining the husband's dominance. Since marriage was — apart from its function to secure offspring — also a way to control both partners' sexual desires and limit them to a specific partner, homosexual relationships would gain women a degree of autonomy from her husband. Consequently, male homosexuality or even extramarital sexuality in men is not mentioned by Étienne. Other conduct books and lay moral treatises occasionally touch on the topic of male sexuality, but treat it as a personal lapse rather than as a factor that endangers the wellbeing of the entire family and society.

The texts present the social order of the twelfth and thirteenth century as a structure with space for male transgression. A man not complying with his social tasks, as seen from a clerical perspective, will cause individual suffering or, in the worst case, bring dishonour to his lineage. Every attempt is made to discourage this, but several authors allow for some deviation from the ideal. Female transgression, however, challenges not just a women's own honour and the honour of her family, husband, or male guardian, but the order of the world as God has installed it. Inasmuch as they are capable of undermining the interconnection of nobility and virtue, their transgressions challenge the legitimation of noble status as such. In firmly integrating them into the noble value system, they become guardians of this system, ensure its continuation, and exercise a disciplining influence on the men of their social group. Male reputation in these texts is based on loyalty to a superior and responsibility to his subjects, communicating his position in the world order. Female reputation is presented as mainly based on controlled sexuality, which communicated a woman's role in the continuity of the noble line and thus the superiority of their social group.

Conclusion

The moral-didactic texts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries relate to the social realities of their audiences, address issues that concern their respective stations in life, and frame their advice according to their needs. Despite the differences in the situation of a baron in thirteenth-century France and an imperial *ministerialis*, the fundamental values on which they based their notions of success and failure were essentially the same. They saw themselves as members of an elite who were distinguished from other classes by their inherent connection with virtue. Nobility could claim that this connection was inherited; their line of descent made them noble by nature — or so they claimed — and dishonourable behaviour was a deviation from the natural state of things. Nobility was meant to be a community of honour, so to speak. Didactic authors could use this claim of inherited honour to influence the behaviour of the noble

class. Only if they acted according to their status should they enjoy the benefit that it entailed. They could assume their full power, but they had to do so in the best interest of the community of which they were in charge. Most importantly, they had to surrender to God and protect the Church. Nobles could also exploit their role as exceptional Christians for their own self-representation. Together with the clergy, the nobility was responsible not just for the functioning of society but for the very maintenance of the divine order of the world. Nobility and clergy were connected not only by blood but also by their function as the leaders of the Christian community, and the values to which they subscribed were largely the same. The *ministeriales* and other 'new men' could not refer back to the same justification of their status by inheritance. Their very existence introduced a meritocratic element into the discourse that contributed to the noble urge to refer not just to their status by birth but to their function. This discourse may have been even more important to the lowest-ranking nobility, who felt threatened in their rank by the upstarts who sometimes became more influential at the courts due to the service they performed. If the non-nobles could not refer to lineage, they could nonetheless subscribe to the same noble ideals and thus integrate themselves into this elite society. These ideals, the more general 'worthy man' and, especially after 1200, the chivalric knight, offered a model for self-representation that combined aspects of noble conduct with those of service and social function. This model also established close ties with the clergy when it became associated with a religious order, resulting in a status comparable to that of a monk. The values on which the high medieval elites based their understanding of themselves and the legitimation of their status stretches across geographical and political boundaries to connect the nobles and knights in all of north-western Europe and beyond. More than this, however, they also crossed the dividing line between the secular and the clerical world and encompassed monks and knights, princes and bishops in one pan-European community of values.

Organizing Knowledge

At the same time as lay audiences were becoming increasingly interested in learning about morality and good conduct from texts, other sciences were also being made available to lay readers. Thus, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, didactic writing diversified not just in the use of the vernacular, but also in the strategies writers employed for teaching. The larger the corpus of written knowledge grew, the more necessary it became to reflect on how it could be organized in a way that kept it accessible and easy to understand while at the same time preserving its authority. New readers and new ways of reading required the texts in the manuscripts to be structured in a way that allowed a reader to quickly find what they were looking for; images also became important additions to the manuscripts and served a range of purposes, from the purely decorative to the didactic. Writing in the vernacular opened up a lot of scope to present knowledge in a way that would best convey its message and writers made ample use of its possibilities. This chapter explores the capacity of vernacular moral education to organize the knowledge it aimed to convey at the level of language, structure, and material transmission. It will trace some major developments in the organization of knowledge that took place between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and that shaped medieval education and the place of moral learning in it. In its first part, I will discuss the distinctive didactic potential of poetry and prose for moral education. In the use of the vernacular, translations from Latin also played an important role and we will see how didactic writing engaged with its sources. These observations tell us much about the prestige of the vernacular languages and their aptness for disseminating learning, but also about the self-image of authors and translators who produced these texts. The second part of this chapter discusses the structural organization of the material. Early didactic writing in the vernaculars was predominantly gnomic and adaptations from Latin sources often simplified the structure of the texts. Their main concerns were applicability and memorability, though an interest in collating classical knowledge is attested in even the earliest texts. In the thirteenth century, texts that collected the wisdom of classical authors and Church fathers were designed to be even more comprehensive and French translations in particular sought to retain the complexity of the Latin treatises. At the same time, moral education became increasingly embedded into a more extensive corpus of knowledge

that was deemed appropriate and useful for the lay aristocracy. Such texts with their ‘encyclopaedic’ ambition connected knowledge of creation with practical philosophy and emphasized their value in successful government. Didactic writing grew in scope and diversified, establishing new forms and developing old ones with great success, as the transmission of these texts shows. In the third part, we will see how these developments — the greater prestige and recognition of vernacular languages for teaching and the tendency towards completeness and structure — are reflected in the manuscripts that transmit these works. Their apparatus could combine decoration with structural and didactic functions, especially in the use of illuminations and diagrams.

The Primacy of Poetry and the Truth of Prose

In principio fuit poeta

Many texts written for the moral education of the lay nobility during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in north-western Europe use a poetic form to convey its message. Poetry remained a popular medium for the transmission of knowledge until the end of the medieval period.¹ Indeed, until the end of the thirteenth century, it was the default form of literary production in most vernaculars. The prominent tradition of the classical didactic poem, commonly exemplified by the *Georgica*, meant that instruction in poetic form came naturally to those schooled in the classical examples.² Moral philosophy in Latin verse won great acclaim even as late c. 1140, when Bernardus Morla presented a lengthy justification that offers insights into the reasons authors might choose poetry over prose, even when the latter was readily available as a literary form for the material in question. Bernardus composed his *De contemptu mundi in trinini salientes*,³ a complicated form of hexameter, which he justified in three ways: firstly, verse was more pleasant to read and easier to remember, so the poetic form in this way supported the content. Secondly, poetry was closely connected to Christianity, as classical poetry began to blossom after the advent of Christendom (Iuvencus, not Virgil, being the poet laureate in his line of argument) and the versified gospels in fact surpassed their prose

1 The breadth of poetic texts that transmitted knowledge to their audiences from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century was explored in the AHRC project ‘Poetic Knowledge in Late Medieval France’. Cf. the contributions to the collective volume *Poetry, Knowledge and Community in Late Medieval France*, ed. by Dixon and Sinclair.

2 For a more comprehensive study of the development of classical Latin didactic poetry, see Schuler and Fitch, ‘Theory and Context of the Didactic Poem’, pp. 1–43.

3 Norberg, *An Introduction to the Study of Medieval Latin Versification*, p. 60.

predecessors. Poetry and Christian edification are therefore in perfect harmony. Thirdly, Bernardus Morla uses his own work as an example of the sublimity of Christian poetry. He could never have completed this lengthy work — over 3000 lines — in such a complicated metre without divine inspiration.⁴

Just as 'a doctor puts honey on the rim of a cup to entice children to drink the [bitter medicine]';⁵ as Lucretius put it, the poet renders the dry and sometimes unappealing matter of their instruction more palatable by the use of pleasant language and poetic form. From Isidore of Seville learned men took the notion that prose was older than verse (Etym. VIII. 7. 1–2), a *topos* so enduring that, later still, Dante would treat poetry before prose in his *De vulgari eloquentia*, because it was older.

[Q]uia ipsum prosaycantes ab avientibus magis accipiunt et quia quod avietum est prosaycantibus permanere videtur exemplar, et non e converso (que quendam videntur prebere primatum), primo secundum quod metricum est ipsum carminem [.]

([B]ecause writers of prose most often learn the vernacular from poets, and because what is set out in poetry serves as a model for those who write prose, and not the other way about — which would seem to confer a certain primacy — I shall first expound the principles according to which the illustrious vernacular is used for writing poetry).⁶

The primacy of poetry before prose was certainly true of Old French literature. The first substantial literary works in French were saints' lives (such as the *Canticle of St Eulalie* from c. 880) and psalters, written in verse. From the eleventh century, we find *chansons de geste*, mostly written in *laisses*, ten-syllable lines with assonance.⁷ Lyrical poetry employs a range of verse forms and poetic genres.⁸ Romances, which appeared from the twelfth century, used predominantly octosyllabic couplets, which were soon also used in other narrative genres such as historiography. It has been argued that the octosyllabic couplet was a clerical invention for the purpose of writing the new, courtly themes developing in French literature in the high medieval period, as they seem to presuppose a literary culture, as opposed to other verse forms that are predominantly meant for oral performance.⁹

4 Bernardus Morla, *De contemptu mundi*, ed. by Wright, pp. 3–5. This example is used in the context of a more comprehensive discussion of the topic in Klopsch, 'Prosa und Vers in der mittellateinischen Literatur', pp. 9–24.

5 Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, ed. by Bailey, 1. 931–50, reiterated at 4. 8–25.

6 Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. and trans. by Botterill, II. I. 1, pp. 45–46.

7 Zumthor, *Essai*.

8 Zumthor, *Essai*, p. 34.

9 Zumthor, *Essai*, pp. 55–60. See also Cushman and others, 'Octosyllable', pp. 970–71.

Evelyn Birge Vitz, however, has found strong evidence to suggest that the eight-syllable rhyming lines are actually pre-literary.¹⁰ Though not all scholars agree with Vitz here, the octosyllabic couplet was made for performance, as can be seen by its later use in dialogue for theatrical performances, after it had fallen out of use in epic and romance.¹¹ Zumthor has previously emphasized the *vocalité* of medieval French (written) literature, which is only fully realized through its declamation by the performer or reader.¹² Given poetry's origins as a marker of structured speech, a mnemonic aid, and a way to sustain the oral performance of longer texts, it particularly lends itself to those genres that were traditionally delivered in speech. Epic is one of them, and so is didactic literature.

In the thirteenth century, poetry develops a new self-reflective character, making use of the performativity of verse. Armstrong and Kay remark:

The capacity of verse to transmit knowledge is enhanced by the way it is visibly anchored in the bodies of the performers and physically shared by the audience. Although the body of a performer may be absent, the content of knowledge sometimes deficient, verse form serves as an index of a certain kind of truth and a placeholder of subjectivity.¹³

In the Occitan language, the homonymy of *vers*, meaning both 'verse' and 'true', inspired puns concerning the truth of poetry. Matfre Ermengaud of Béziers invokes this homonymy in his *Breviary d'Amour* when he asserts the truthfulness of his source Aimeric de Peguilhan: 'It is indeed true without mistake [or: a poem without fault], according to what Sir Aimeric said.'¹⁴ Thus, instruction predominantly intended for oral performance or associated with oral forms, such as didactics, was most often composed in rhyme.

By exploiting the lack of complexity in the rhyming couplet, didactic poems develop very simple poetic structures that allow for easy alterations. In most cases, this structure is not linear, and often there does not appear to be a thread connecting the different precepts. Didactic texts such as the *Magezoge* and the *Urbain le Courtois* use rhyming couplets and do not follow a strict internal logic, so they could easily have been adapted to different situations and audiences, and we can see in the transmission of

¹⁰ First suggested in Vitz, 'Rethinking Old French Literature' (pp. 307–21), and expanded in her book *Orality and Performance*.

¹¹ Kittay questions Vitz's conclusion of a pre-literate origin of the couplet but supports its characterization as a verse intended for spoken performance rather than reading. See Kittay, 'On Octo', pp. 291–98.

¹² Zumthor, *La Poésie et la Voix*.

¹³ Armstrong and Kay, eds, *Knowing Poetry*, p. 3.

¹⁴ 'Ben es vers senes falhensa | Segon quez a dig N'Aimerics' (ll. 29402–03:) cited and trans. by Armstrong and Kay, eds, *Knowing Poetry*, p. 6.

the manuscripts that this was in fact the case. The advice in the *Magezoge* occurs in no specific order, in blocks of mostly two verses, sometimes four or six. Longer paragraphs focusing on a particular topic can be found mainly at the beginning of the poem. However, most rhyming couplets could be (and have been) rearranged or omitted without loss of context. The manuscripts show significant variation. In the main body of the text, the advice is grouped in thematic chunks of two or more rhyming couplets. These groups are organized differently in the different versions of the poem. Gerhard Wolf assumes that this is due to their diverse performative potential: he imagines the poem being read by several speakers in a public performance, the different pieces of advice confronted with one another to achieve varied effects.¹⁵ While the precise circumstances of its performance must remain speculation, we can observe in its manuscript transmission that its gnomic character makes the *Magezoge* amenable to adaptation: content can be added, regrouped, or omitted according to the situation of performance, occasion, or audience. A *magezoge* (educator) may prepare the text for a performance and chose different precepts depending on his audience.¹⁶

As we can see, poetic form in and of itself opens the door for modifications, but rhyme can also serve to keep structural units together. In the *Doctrinal Sauvage*, this is enhanced by the fact that the identical rhyme is often sustained for a whole stanza or more and thus provide structure and discourage alteration. Stanzas can range from four to fourteen lines. Further connection is established across several stanzas by the frequent use of morphologically related words, such as composites of *corder* in stanzas XXV–XXVII (*descorder*, *accorder*, *recorder*) or forms of *riche* in stanzas LXVII–LI.¹⁷ While the stanzaic form maintains a stronger connection between certain precepts, it still allows for variation as entire stanzas can be removed or added. For instance, eleven manuscripts of the *Doctrinal Sauvage* omit the first stanza, in which a framing device is introduced, and begin immediately with the advice. As long as the stanzas are not logically connected, or some other structure is superimposed, each copyist can easily alter the text according to its intended use.

Poetic forms were therefore well-suited to conveying less complex moral teachings to different audiences in a pleasing way, and they could increase the memorability of the single precepts that were connected by rhyme. Formally, it offered a degree of textual stability through rhyme, but

¹⁵ Wolf, 'Paradoxe Normativität', p. 296.

¹⁶ Jäger has observed similar variations in Freidank's gnomic verse, depending on different 'Gebrauchssituationen' (situations of usage); see 'Durch reimen gute lere geben', pp. 263–70.

The *Magezoge* transmitted in Dessau LB, cod. M 68, 10ra–12rb (fifteenth century), for instance, drops the father–son frame and adapts the poem for the readership of a nunnery.

¹⁷ *Doctrinal Sauvage*, ed. by Sakari.

also accommodated adaptations for specific situations. Poetry carried its own authority and really came into its own in the moment of performance.

The Prose 'Revolution'

Despite the versatility and authority of poetry, lay instruction in prose existed and was widely copied and read. By the thirteenth century, prose and poetry existed alongside each other and each influenced the other. There was a certain functional division and a difference between the respective audiences for prose and verse texts, but the dividing line was not absolute and remained permeable. The various translations of the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* offer an interesting case study for the different aims and purposes of prose texts, the situations in which they were used, and the audiences who were interested in them.

The first vernacular adaptation of the *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, the *Tugendspiegel*, was written in verse. Its author, Wernher von Elmendorf, reworked his Latin source considerably to adapt it for an audience of German noblemen, to the point that it took scholars until 1890 to recognize the *Tugendspiegel* as an adaptation of the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* at all. The most obvious change Wernher applied to his source is the formal alteration from prose treatise to poetry, which entails a number of decisions concerning the order of the material: the complex structure of the treatise — difficult to follow in an aural reception — is dissolved and the basic distinction between *useful* and *honourable* collapsed into a double formula: 'vrume und ere' (usefulness and honour). Formulas are helpful as mnemonic devices to ensure the collocation remains clear to the audience throughout the performance and thereafter. The choice of poetry for the translation into a vernacular language was not made out of necessity. Other translators of the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* made different decisions.

The primary use of poetry changed between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when private reading became more common. The next vernacular re-elaboration of the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* was produced almost a century later, in the second half of the thirteenth century. In the meantime, the *Moralium dogma* became a very popular text that was widely copied and transmitted. Gerald of Wales makes use of it in his *De principis instructione*.¹⁸ Thomasin von Zerklære uses it along with other sources for his *Welscher Gast*. In the latter half of the thirteenth century, an anonymous translator rendered the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* in French prose. This translation, the *Moralitez des philosophes*, would turn out to be even more influential on vernacular didactic literature than its Latin source. While the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* is transmitted in

¹⁸ Hunt, 'The Deposit of the Latin Classics', pp. 54–55.

about twenty-five manuscripts dating from the thirteenth century or from around 1300,¹⁹ twenty-three manuscripts of the *Moralitez des philosophes* are dated to the same period. Given that the *Livre* was translated only in the second half of the century, this indicates that it was even more successful than the Latin original. Manuscripts of the *Moralitez* circulated widely across Western Europe, predominantly between Flanders, France, Italy, and England. Moreover, the French translation itself became a source for other vernacular versions, such as an Italian version (known as the *Libro del Costumanza*) from the thirteenth century, and a French version *mise-en-verse* by Alard de Cambrai from the same century. However, as Sundby has shown, Brunetto Latini used the Latin text as a source for the second part of his *Trésor*.²⁰ All of these texts also date to the thirteenth century. A Gascon translation is transmitted in a single codex from the fourteenth century,²¹ and a Castilian translation (*Libro de Moralidades*) has come down to us in a miscellany from the fifteenth century.²² Few manuscripts of the French *Moralitez des philosophes* survive in Italy, perhaps because of the success of an Italian translation, again based on the French prose text, which is transmitted in twenty-four manuscripts, most of them from between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.²³ Finally, Jean Miélot produced another verse version of the prose text in the fifteenth century.

The incredible success of the *Moralités des philosophes* is, as its transmission indicates, a direct result of its prose form. Writing in vernacular prose was, while not entirely new, only just coming into favour in the thirteenth century. Emmanuèle Baumgartner shows that for vernacular

19 For the moment, this number cannot be confirmed definitively. The ARLIMA database lists ninety-eight manuscripts, twenty-four of which are dated to the thirteenth century or c. 1300. However, among those I have found several errors, such as manuscripts that do not contain the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* (but instead other works of Guillaume de Conches). Some manuscripts are listed without a date. In these cases, I have used the date provided by the catalogue in which they are listed or datings from secondary literature. Furthermore, I have found several manuscripts of the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* from the twelfth and thirteenth century that are not listed on ARLIMA. BnF latin 3719 (thirteenth century) includes fragments of the *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, and latin 3454 (end of the twelfth century) includes an incomplete text. Frankfurt am Main, Universitätsbibliothek, Q 134 does not exist, but this library has a copy of the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* from the twelfth century under the signature Ms. Barth. 148. New research into the transmission of the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* is long overdue.

20 Sundby, *Della vita e delle opere di Brunetto Latini*, pp. 162–63.

21 Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid 7884, dated into the fifteenth century; cf. the PhD thesis of Davide Battagliola, 'Tradizione e traduzioni'. Battagliola can prove that the text was based on a version of the *Livre de Moralités* (pp. 149–52).

22 Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, cod. 10011. The codex is studied in detail by Millás Vallicrosa, *Las traducciones orientales*. Again, Battagliola, 'Tradizioni e traduzioni', who edits the text for the first time, proves that the translation is based on the French prose text rather than the Latin original (pp. 152–54, edition pp. 241–89).

23 Edited and discussed in detail in Battagliola, 'Tradizioni e traduzioni', pp. 155–70.

historiography in particular, writing prose was a conscious choice that reflected the author's claim about the truthfulness of their account.²⁴ The truthfulness of prose becomes a veritable *topos* in chronicles as well as in later prose romances. With regards to translations of Latin sources, writers like Benoît de Sainte-Maure also remark that the restraints of the octosyllabic couplet cannot do justice to the complexities of the Latin texts which demand a rendering in vernacular prose.²⁵ The *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César* recounts its historical narrative in French prose, but offers moralizing commentaries in verse.²⁶ We can observe a similar tendency in the *Ovide moralisé*: the poem offers explanations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in verse, in which the moral message can be interpreted for its audience without compromising the authority of the source.²⁷ In both cases, the moralizing versions enjoyed considerable success and were frequently transmitted in collections of courtly literature, indicating a lay readership.²⁸ The author of a poem and the adaptor of a versification made an effort to make the content palatable, pleasant, and easily remembered, and may also have added moralizing explanations. This may be the reason that we come across the names of authors more frequently in poetry: the process of adaptation and moralization is the actual achievement attributed to the author.²⁹ In prose translations, the author does not assume a voice,³⁰ but withdraws behind the text and lets its contents speak for itself. This may be the case even more often with compilations of *auctoritates*, full of time-honoured names.

The prose text's claim to truthfulness and authority makes it well-suited as a source for a further text in another language or a re-elaboration (e.g. in verse). A poem is already a concession to the situation in which it is to be used. This is the reason for the instability of verse texts, which are adapted to each new performance. A prose translation instead provides a stable basis for new renderings, such as translations or *mise-en-verse*. In some manuscripts we find annotations by readers who attempted to correct the text by supplying missing words or erroneous readings, just as they would do with an authoritative Latin text.³¹

24 Baumgartner, 'Le choix', pp. 7–13.

25 Baumgartner, 'La choix', p. 3.

26 Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'Moralization and History', pp. 41–46.

27 A new edition is currently being prepared by the Franco-German project 'Ovide en français. Genèse, transformation et réception de l'Ovide moralisé'; cf. Gaggero, 'La nouvelle édition de l'Ovide moralisé', pp. 1375–88.

28 Bloch, 'La tradition manuscrite de l'Ovide moralisé', pp. 80–81.

29 Unzeitig, *Autornamen und Autorschaft*; Stempel, 'Die Anfänge der romanischen Prosa im XIII. Jahrhundert', p. 593.

30 Zumthor, *La lettre et la voix*, p. 136.

31 For example, in BnF fr. 1822 or BnF Arsenal 5201.

Whereas verse is made for a particular performance, prose is made for preserving the text. Lars Boje Mortensen has recently presented a wide-ranging study on the 'prose revolution' in a range of languages (Greek, Latin, French, and Old Norse), in which he discusses the degree of literarization and what he calls 'librarization' that a literary community needs to fulfil in order for prose literature to become successful.³² According to Mortensen, prose typically becomes widespread when readers are also interested in the storing and archiving of books, rather than simply in the texts they transmit. This interest goes hand in hand with processes of canonization and corpus building to determine which texts are worthy of producing, copying, and storing.³³

The codex BnF français 1822 demonstrates this type of interest, which goes beyond transmission to encompass storage, organization, and canonization. The choice of texts included in the codex displays a conscious decision on the part of the scribe.³⁴ The codex in its present form transmits a selection of sermons in French, a French translation of the History of the Trojan War by Dares, a Roman history of Eutropius in French, the *Secretum Secretorum* in the translation by Jofroi de Waterford,³⁵ the *Image du monde* by Gossuin de Metz, two devotional poems on St Mary and the Cross, Marie de France's translation of the Fables of Aesop, the *Moralitez des philosophes*, and the *Lucidaire*. The theme of education is very prominent in this codex. With the French translations of the *Secretum secretorum*, the *Elucidarium*, and the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* alongside the *Image du monde*, the codex provides access to four of the most popular educational texts in the vernacular, three of which were also immensely popular in their Latin original.³⁶ Moreover, these texts are frequently transmitted together and often appear in codices that also transmit historiographic writing in the thirteenth century. Historiography and didactic literature in translation are among the earliest vernacular texts to be systematically composed in prose. This has often been observed of historiography, but largely overlooked in relation to didacticism.³⁷ BnF français 1822 thus presents an important cross-section of the vernacular prose bestsellers of its time. The common theme in these works is not just a didactic one: while historiographical texts are often justified by their

32 Mortensen, 'The Sudden Success of Prose'.

33 Mortensen, 'The Sudden Success of Prose', p. 6.

34 Cf. Strinna, *Viandes esperiteiles*, p. 79.

35 For a study of two historiographical texts in the codex and the process of *translatio*, see the doctoral thesis of Métois, 'Histoire inédites de la translatio studii', and Métois, 'La traduction'.

36 The *Image du monde* was originally composed in Latin but immediately translated into French by its author, Gossuin de Metz; see Brown, 'The Vernacular Universe', for its indebtedness to both Latin learned tradition and vernacular narrative.

37 Baumgartner, 'La choix', p. 7.

educational objectives, they also serve to provide the European aristocracy with a narrative of their noble origins, the great deeds of their (acclaimed) ancestors, and the proud and glorious heritage of their dynasties, which they often connected to mythical origins in the blood lines of Aeneas, Charlemagne, or Alexander the Great. Access to moral education similarly grants the aristocracy claims to moral superiority. Both genres become foundational for noble legitimation in the thirteenth century.³⁸ In the case of the *Secré de secrez*, both these recurring themes are visible. In participating in the instruction that the great philosopher Aristotle supposedly provided for his disciple Alexander, the most powerful emperor of all time, the aristocratic readers placed themselves firmly in this context.

However, the order of texts in BnF français 1822 has changed from when it was first compiled. The final text in the book, the *Lucidaire*, is followed by the prologue and the table of contents for the *Secré de secrez* (fols 248^v–49^v), indicating that the order was originally different. Giovanni Strinna has shown that the central quires of the codex (VIII–XII) were originally among the last.³⁹ Julie Métois has offered a convincing explanation: while the codex was originally organized according to a thematic principle, the new order of the works follows authorial criteria. The *Secré de secrez*, originally at the end of the codex as part of the moral-didactic unit of the book, has moved behind the two historiographic works as all three are translations by Jofroi de Waterford.⁴⁰ The colophon on fol. 143^v confirms that the scribe, Servais Copale, was well aware of the popularity of this translator and explicitly mentions him.⁴¹ We note a conscious reflection on canonization and organization of the material in the book. While prose translators do not claim authorship in the way adaptors of verse texts do, they could nonetheless gain sufficient fame to affect the organization of a codex arranged by translator. Furthermore, it became more common in the thirteenth century to organize or reorganize miscellanies according to coherent principles, e.g. by topic or author.⁴² BnF français 1822 thus provides ‘un’autentica biblioteca settoriale dei più importanti e diffusi strumenti didattici affermatasi nel corso del XIII secolo’,⁴³ precisely because of its apparent interest in what Mortensen calls ‘librarization’.

It is worth noting that in the thirteenth century, those didactic texts that are written in prose are overwhelmingly translations from Latin sources and often they are transmitted in the same codices as the Latin. These prose translations attest to a desire to make Latin learning accessible

38 Wittig, ‘Adliges Selbstverständnis’.

39 Strinna, *Viandes esperiteiles*, p. 77.

40 Métois, ‘Histoires inédites de la translatio studii’, p. 112.

41 BnF fr. 1822, fol. 143^v.

42 Collet, ‘Les collections vernaculaires’, p. 65.

43 Strinna, *Viandes esperiteiles*, p. 79.

to an engaged audience that actively requests those texts. While poetic instruction is composed to make the teachings interesting even to those unwilling to be taught, prose texts seem to presuppose an audience of those who are not just willing to learn but actively commissioning translations of Latin texts of which they already know. BnF français 1822 collects a variety of such popular translations of historiographical and didactic texts that were for the most part written in prose (with the exception of the *Image du monde*). Giovanni Strinna has argued that these texts were specifically requested by the lay aristocratic commissioner of the codex and copied for him in a Dominican scriptorium.⁴⁴ The reputation of Jofroi de Waterford as a translator probably served to incite interest in these texts, but all of them were also well known in their Latin versions. These prose translations were not only popular with those who were illiterate in Latin but reached a much broader audience than didactic poetry did.

A prose text is comparatively stable, and like a Latin text it can become the basis for new versions, either in other languages or in verse. The process of *mise-en-verse* again adapts the prose text for a different kind of reception and narrows down the intended audience. Nonetheless, the appreciation of poetic didacticism did not disappear, as the later verse version or the *Moralités* shows. Adrian Armstrong and Sarah Kay have emphasized that even after the advent of prose there was still a lively tradition of conveying knowledge in the form of poetry.⁴⁵ In fact, they observe that the polarity of prose and verse shaped the connection between poetry and knowledge: the 'prose-revolution' redefines the status of poetry. Despite claims that only prose could transmit the truth, poems transmitting a range of epistemic contents — encyclopaedic, political, philosophical, moral, among others — were common until the end of the era of the so-called *Rhétoriquers*, c. 1530.⁴⁶ Not only could poetry transmit knowledge, but it could bring about greater edification than plain prose. Poetic skills had been associated with morality since the classical period, so this connection was particularly strong. *Li livres dou Trésor*, written in 1270 by the Florentine notary Brunetto Latini, is the first medieval text in which prose writing is explicitly mentioned in opposition to verse:

La grant partison de tout[tes] parle[ures] est en .ii. manieres, une qui est en prose et une autre qui est en rime[.]

(The main division of all speech is in two modes, one that is in prose and another one that is in rhyme).⁴⁷

44 Strinna, 'Cultura e spiritualità cistercense', p. 436. The commissioner of the codex has already been discussed by Pinchbeck in 'A Medieval Self-Educator'.

45 Armstrong and Kay, eds, *Knowing Poetry*.

46 Armstrong and Kay, eds, *Knowing Poetry*, p. 3.

47 Brunetto Latini, *Tresor*, ed. by Beltrami and others, III. 10. 1.

Latini's encyclopaedic *Trésor* employs French prose to ensure that it is understood as widely as possible,⁴⁸ while his shorter Italian *Tesoretto* of allegorical, moralizing content is written in Italian verse. However, as we have seen with the prose and verse versions of the French *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, equating prose with science and verse with moralizing content does not do justice to the complexity of the matter. The *Image du monde*, for instance, was written in Latin, and translated into French verse by Gossuin de Metz in 1245, and then in the fourteenth century rendered in prose.⁴⁹ The process could go both ways.

In principio fuit interpretes

Translations of Latin sources were, as we have seen, important stepping stones on the way to vernacular education and could be executed in various ways. The choice between verse or prose vernacularizations and the changes made to the sources depended not just on the status of poetry and prose but also on intended function.

With a reformulation of the traditional proverb, Gianfranco Folena reminded us in 1973 that even though much of literature has its beginnings in poetry — *in principio fuit poeta* — most literary languages began as intermediary languages for making translations.⁵⁰ The Latin *transferre* (and its modern language cognates) becomes reserved for the written translation, the transferral from one written language into another, as opposed to 'interpret' which is commonly used in Romance languages and English for the oral practice (just as *dolmetschen* is in German). If the *interpretes* marks the beginning of a literary language, then it must have been in oral mediation. With regards to moral education, we can see this principle at work in the practice of the tutors at the courts or priests who used Latin sources for their oral instruction or sermons. The focal point of these practices was always the source language, which was being made comprehensible — being interpreted — by the mediator. *Transferre*, on the other hand, already implies the notion that both form and content

48 'Et se aucun demandoit por quoi ceste livre est escrit en roman selonc le patois de France [...] je diroie que ce est par.ii. raisons: l'un que nos [so]mes en France, l'autre por ce que la parleure est plus delitable et plus comune a touz languagees' (And if anyone should ask why this book is written in romance according to the dialect of France, I would say it is for two reasons: One is that we are in France, and the other because the speech is the most delightful and common of all languages). Brunetto Latini, *Tresor*, ed. by Beltrami, 1. 2.

1. Brunetto Latini wrote the *Trésor* while in exile in France.

49 Connochie-Bourgne, 'Pourquoi et comment réécrire une encyclopédie?'

50 Folena, *Volgarizzare et tradurre*, p. 3.

are being carried over into a new tradition, just as imperial power is in *translatio imperio* or the tradition of knowledge in *translatio studii*.⁵¹

The Italian *volgarizzare* is a term specifically for translations from Latin into the vernacular and, by extension, from one vernacular into another. This form of translation, which begins to come into its own in the thirteenth century, often takes the form of extensive reworking and adaptation, with a strong focus on the cultural context of the target language (Wittgenstein's *Bezugssystem*): *transferre* becomes closely associated with *tradere*.⁵²

Rita Copeland has shown that translations into the vernacular can serve as a 'vehicle for appropriation of academic discourse'.⁵³ Translation must be considered in relation to exegetical practice: both procedures aim to displace the original text. In the absence of a strong rhetorical practice, hermeneutics have 'assumed the rhetorical function of a productive application to discourse'.⁵⁴ Copeland argues that medieval translation can take place as primary translation, which works 'within the structures of exegetical service [to the original text]' or secondary translation, which is a 'fully-fledged rhetorical appropriation'.⁵⁵ In secondary translation exegetical strategies are employed in a productive way to create a new vernacular text which is fully authoritative in its own right: *amplificatio*, *abbreviatio*, *intentio auctoris*, and other rhetorical means create distance from a source: *modus inveniendi* and *modus interpretandi* become equivalents. Wernher's *Tugendspiegel* demonstrates this practice. In giving his source, which remains unnamed, a new *intentio auctoris* (to teach that which brings *vruome und ere*), by expanding, rearranging and abbreviating it, he creates an entirely new text, which is so different from the original that it took scholars a long time to identify its source. The *Tugendspiegel* does not simply serve as an aid for understanding the *Moralium dogma philosophorum*. Indeed, much of what the Latin text explores was entirely irrelevant to Wernher, such as the hierarchies of virtues or the situations of conflict between honourable and useful deeds. The *Moralium dogma philosophorum* can be regarded as a commentary on its own source, Cicero's *De officiis*, in its attempt to systematize and reconcile and thus help understand the classical work. The *Tugendspiegel* appropriates its source, gives it a new structure and literary form and moves the discourse into a new sphere: a scholastic reflection on the hierarchy and conflicts of virtues has become a practical, applicable instruction about good conduct in the world.

51 On vernacular translations of historiography and their relation to *translatio studii* specifically, see Métois, 'La traduction du De excidio Troiae de Darès le Phrygien'.

52 Folena, *Volgarizzare et tradurre*, p. 10.

53 Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutic, and Translation in the Middle Ages*, p. 3.

54 Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutic, and Translation in the Middle Ages*, p. 17.

55 Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutic, and Translation in the Middle Ages*, p. 20.

Peter Dembowski has introduced a distinction similar to Copeland's in the study of the earliest translations into the vernacular languages. Specifically with regards to French renderings of Latin sources, he emphasized that 'the early French vernacularizations were, according to any modern criterion, not translations but adaptations'.⁵⁶ He observes that only in the course of the thirteenth century do we see a gradual shift from 'the free utilization, adaptation, and borrowing (in modern parlance "plagiarism") of an often unavowed Latin source' to more faithful translations of Latin texts that are indicated as the source of the vernacular version. Dembowski develops a taxonomy of vernacular translations based on various degrees of dependence on the Latin source text: from *translation-compilations*, in which the vernacular writers take freely what they need from a variety of texts, through *silent translations* that do not indicate their source and *actualizations* that render the Latin source usable by their new audiences, to 'real' or *service translations*, which are faithful to their sources. This last category can be imagined as an aid for understanding the Latin text. Hult has shown, using the example of Jean de Meun's translation of Boethius' *De consolatio Philosophiae*, that the reader was advised to use the Latin and the French texts side-by-side, the latter serving the understanding of the former, a set-up mirrored in codices that provide both texts facing each other.⁵⁷ Both Dembowski and Hult connect the development of the more faithful 'service' translation to the rise of prose. Not only is prose writing considered a better medium for a close translation of a Latin text, they both derive their impetus, according to Dembowski, from a new emphasis on 'truth' — that is, the authenticity of the source.⁵⁸ Depending on the subject, the intention of the text, and the nature of the source, this authenticity can be highly important or entirely irrelevant. As we have seen for the *Tugendspiegel*, what counted was the identity of the classical *auctoritates*, not of the twelfth-century compiler. Wernher offers a didactic text tailored to the needs of a twelfth-century German aristocratic audience, which is legitimized by the classical authors it cites. The author explains and relates these citations to the matter at hand very much in the fashion of a hermeneutical exegesis revealing the *sensus moralis* of the pagan authors. In the thirteenth century, the French prose version of the *Moralium dogma*, the *Moralités des philosophes*, uses these authorities as well but stays much closer to the Latin text. This, however, is not a service translation either: its source is not mentioned and nothing suggests that it was composed to aid the understanding of the *Moralium dogma*.

⁵⁶ Dembowski, 'Learned Latin Treatises', p. 257.

⁵⁷ Hult, 'Poetry and the Translation', pp. 22–23.

⁵⁸ Dembowski, 'Learned Latin Treatises', p. 259. A statement transmitted in the Pseudo-Turpin concerning the 'truth of prose' is generally considered the earliest reflection of and witness to this notion.

Neither is it a literal translation or an actualization. None of the taxonomic categories introduced by Dembowski applies. The *Moralités des philosophes* exists as a *sui generis* composition. It copies the structure provided by the Latin text, that of a treatise resolving the perceived contradiction of the honourable and the useful, because it addresses a similar audience. It is not necessary to interpret the text for an audience to make it useful, as its implied reader is interested not only in applicability but in the theoretical and systematic character of the Latin text, rendered in their own language. These readers may or may not have read Latin, but they preferred the text in French.⁵⁹ This says a lot about the status of French as a language of culture and erudition and the self-confidence of its speakers. It was perfectly acceptable to read learned literature in a vernacular language, despite the existence of a Latin original that one was equally capable of reading.

We also find confirmation of the autonomous status of the French prose translation in the existence of a verse rendering which also dates from the late thirteenth century. This *mise-en-verse* by Alard de Cambrai takes far more liberties with its source and adds parts of other authoritative texts. Like Wernher von Elmendorf, Alard is careful to mention the classical authorities, but he neglects his thirteenth-century source. This translation-compilation works quite differently from the German verse version of a century earlier.

In Alard's poem, the interplay between verse and prose confirms much of what we observed about the functional differentiation of the two literary styles: the rubrics that transmit the *auctoritates* are written in prose, but the paraphrases of these moral precepts and Alard's moralizing readings are in verse. Like the later *Ovide moralisé* and unlike the *Moralités de philosophes*, Alard does not simply confront his readers with the knowledge offered by the classical authorities, even though they are explicitly presented as the guarantors of truth:

Bone est la verité trouvee, | Qi est de verité provee, | Car parole
d'auctorité | Doit senefer verité. | D'une ovre me voeil entremetre |
Dont a tesmoins puis traire et metre | Les plus mestres clers qui ainc
furent | Qui tot sorent et tot conurent.

(Worthy is the truth that is found and is proven by truth, because the word of authority must signify truth. I want to engage with a work for which I can consult and line up witnesses, the most masterful clerks who ever existed, who know all and understand everything.)⁶⁰

⁵⁹ For example, Reims, Bibliothèque municipale 1275 from the late thirteenth century transmits the *Moralités* in an otherwise mostly Latin codex.

⁶⁰ Alard de Cambrai, *Livre de philosophie et de moralité*, ed. by Payen, ll. 17–24.

Despite the omniscience of these ‘masterful clerks,’ Alard provides a commentary that helps his readers understand their significance. Unlike his source, the *Moralités*, and the source of that work, the *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, his reading of the compiled precepts is in places Christianized — again, the similarity to the *Ovide moralisé* is striking. But Alard’s moralizing commentaries are rare. Jung has shown that Alard (just like Wernher, who applies classical knowledge directly to specific situations in the lives of his audience) relates the sentences to the experience of his readers, for example when he reinterprets a section about eloquence in urban government with regards to the administration of seigneurial lordship.⁶¹ Alard presents many of the same sentences as the *Moralités* but provides both guidance for understanding them and guidance for applying them in a medieval aristocratic context, while the prose translation, just like the Latin text, simply compiles the valuable knowledge handed down from the age of knowledge — Antiquity.

Alard’s *mise-en-verse* shows us something else about the difference between poetry and prose that is equally valid for translations: the self-awareness of the poet compared with a prose translator or a compiler. In most of the works that transmit moral instruction to a lay audience in a vernacular language, no author names are recorded. The few we have are poets: verse renderings of an existing text (Wernher von Elmendorf and Alard de Cambrai) or poetic instruction (e.g. *Sauvage d’Arras* and the works of Robert de Blois). While the compiler or prose translator does not claim authorship of his work, the poet does. The act of putting in verse what was previously in plain prose, the commentary and the actualization of the knowledge for the use and pleasure of the audience — in short, the combination of *prodesse et delectare* — is an accomplishment that one can characterize as authorship.

Structuring Knowledge: From Florilegium to Encyclopaedia

As the prestige of the vernacular languages for educational matters increased and the requirements of vernacular teaching changed, the way authors organized their material developed and diversified. We have already seen that vernacular translations dealt with their sources in different ways; the same goes for alterations to their structure. We can trace the developments that occurred in the structural organization of vernacular moral education between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the example of the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* and the alterations to its structure

⁶¹ Jung, ‘À propos de la moralité’, p. 504.

made by vernacular authors and translators. As discussed in Chapter 2, the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* is a collection of sentences by classical moral philosophers and early Christian writers organized in the style of Cicero's *De officiis*. The florilegium — a collection of the 'flowers' of classical philosophy — is structured as a treatise around the dialectical relationship between honourable and useful virtues, an opposition that is eventually resolved in the work. The vernacular texts that draw on it alter its structure, sometimes significantly, for their own purposes. While the *Tugendspiegel* dissolves the dialectic structure and develops its arguments in the associative manner of early vernacular didactic writing, the *Moralités des philosophes* stays true to the source and retains the structure. The *mise-en-verse* version by Alard de Cambrai does not retain the structure but keeps the character of the florilegium, and even adds more authoritative *sententiae* to the collection, striving for greater completeness.

Already in the twelfth century, Latin learned literature had undergone significant developments and florilegia like the *Moralium dogma* were soon surpassed in success by more comprehensive treatments of the available knowledge that aimed for greater comprehensiveness and unity in their presentation. By the first half of the thirteenth century, this interest began to filter into and shape vernacular writing, too. Vernacular works continued to draw on the *Moralium dogma* but they integrated its moral philosophy into a larger corpus of knowledge. Thomasin von Zirklare focused on moral education but added to *Der Welsche Gast* substantial parts on the other sciences, the cosmos, and creation, whereas Latini's *Trésor* embedded moral philosophy in a 'treasury' of knowledge about the world and good government. These developments in structure testify to an increased appreciation of learning in general, but also to the central place of moral education with the corpus of medieval knowledge, especially the knowledge that was deemed both appropriate and useful to a high-ranking lay audience.

Collecting Authority

Early vernacular texts often develop their topics associatively, rather than structured by topic or category, or they simply offer disjointed gnomic precepts that can often be captured within a single rhyming couplet, as described above for the *Magezoge*. When Wernher von Elmendorf adapted the *Moralium dogma* into his *Tugendspiegel* he dissolved its structure and used this associative quality to move from one topic to the next. The sequence of topics is often guided by their applicability in specific situations. As already mentioned, the central opposition in the *Moralium dogma* is dissolved into a double formula that helps structure the text. In the first 550 verses, this formula (containing the collocations *vrume und ere*) occurs four times; on another four occasions, only the benefit for the honourable

is emphasized.⁶² Later in the poem the *formulae* are more varied.⁶³ This associative connection of topics is a major strategy for creating meaning. The aspects of a certain virtue are not connected by an abstract underlying order; there is no systematic scheme and relationship between the virtues — no ‘system of virtue’.⁶⁴ Instead, Wernher demonstrates relation rather than separation of virtues, with practical advice appearing in the text as it might appear in the lives of the audience: interconnected, with no clear distinction between religious and secular, private and public.

The style of argumentation in the *Tugendspiegel* is emphatic rather than dialectic. In most cases, Wernher gives plain precepts without explanation or argumentation. The authority of the authors he quotes is sufficient; he does not seem to expect the audience to question them. Therefore, Wernher is discernibly keen to mention the names of the authorities assembled in the Latin florilegium. Since we do not know from which manuscript Wernher von Elmendorf worked, we cannot be sure if he copied them from the source or made the effort to find the authors. Perhaps he knew them by heart — which could explain some misattributions in the *Tugendspiegel*.⁶⁵ It is also possible that he worked with a manuscript in which a later commentator had added them in the margins.⁶⁶ The German text names authorities in forty-nine cases. The poem as transmitted in manuscript Klosterneuburg 1056 mentions two names which are not in the Latin text (Ovid and Xenophon) and it names two authors erroneously (ll. 696 and 906 refer to Seneca when it is actually Cicero and Sallust, respectively, who are translated).⁶⁷ The Latin references in the margins of manuscript Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. germ. oct. 226 add author names where the German poem does not supply them. The hand of the margins can be dated to the end of the twelfth century, meaning the annotations

62 Wernher von Elmendorf, *Tugendspiegel*, ed. by Bumke: *Frum und ere*: ll. 7, 85–86, 47374, 546–47; *lerin/erin*: ll. 353–54, 379–80, 369–70, 413–14. ‘Noch sal ich dich lerin wes du bedarft zu dinen erin’ (Furthermore I shall teach you what you need for your honour).

63 Variations occur, such as: ‘noch saltu ratis lebin’ (l. 471), ‘noch saltu daz merkin’ (l. 519), ‘noch salich dich ein tugent lerin’ (l. 647), ‘noch wil ich dir kundin’ (l. 695), ‘noch merke was man dich lere’ (l. 855).

64 Cf. the scholarly debate about ‘Ritterliches Tugendsystem’ (chivalric system of virtues) in the collected volume by *Ritterliches Tugendsystem*, ed. by Eifler.

65 Bumke, ‘Einleitung’, pp. xi and xxxiii.

66 A number of such manuscripts exists; see, for example, BnF Latin 16581, latin 2513; Fribourg/Freiburg, Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire/Kantons- und Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. L 293 (thirteenth century) where the names of the *auctoritates*, together with other annotations, are added by a much later hand.

67 Holmberg, ‘Der verfasser und das werk’, p. 8 claims that Ovid was introduced into the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* only in a later redaction. Bumke correctly points out that the name must already have been in the manuscript used by Wernher around 1170 (Bumke, ‘Einleitung’, p. xxxiii).

were added only shortly after the main text was written.⁶⁸ That means both the author of the text and the annotator had a copy of the *Moralium dogma* that recorded the author names. The quotations in the margins are taken from the chapters *De providentia* (Seneca, Boethius, and Cicero) and *De clientelis* (Horace).⁶⁹ The Juvenal quotation is not in the text of the *Moralium dogma* as the Holmberg edition gives it. While the classical authorities seem vital for the legitimation of the precepts, the Latin compilation itself did not seem to carry any authority on which Wernher wanted to draw: the *redde* from which he translated is not specified and thus the origin of the work in contemporary Latin discourse remains hidden. Despite the radical change in structure, the *Tugendspiegel* remains a florilegium of the classical authors who were considered of greatest interest.

With more attention paid to structure, the manuscripts increasingly guide the reader's reception by including rubrics, titles, and summaries. The French prose version largely follows the Latin source and as such initially serves as an aid to the Latin text. Its source text was probably close to the Saint-Germain manuscript of the *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, which does not transmit author names, so perhaps this translator, too, worked from an annotated manuscript.⁷⁰ Many manuscripts facilitate the reception by including numerous rubrics and summaries. The prose version soon became a source in itself that was annotated and commented on; apart from its numerous translations, it served as a source for *Proverbes Seneke le philosophe* and single *dits* in the *Diz et proverbes des Sages*. In the verse rendering by Alard de Cambrai, the *Livre de philosophie et de moralites*, the rubrics are central. Alard supplies the quotations from the *auctoritates* that he found in the *Moralites des philosophes* in prose and adds further quotations from other sources, such as the *Speculum historie* by Vincent of Beauvais, the *Distiches* of Pseudo-Cato, and the *Roman d'Alexandre*.⁷¹ He then explains and interprets them in the text of the verse below. These rubrics became the source of a thirteenth-century collection of *sententie* based on rubrics of Alard's version.⁷² These collections of

68 The hand in the margins frequently has *v* for *u* in within a word. Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books*, p. 64 n. 44: 'All our examples [*v* for *u* in the middle of a word] are German and late twelfth century'.

69 The quotations read: 1^r: 'Boetius neque enim quod ante oculos est situm sufficit intuenti rerum enim exitus prudentia metitur'; 1^v: 'Seneca falsi amici pro consilio adulationem et una est intentio eorum quis eorum blandissime fallat'; 2^r top: 'Oratius fautor utroque tuum laudabit pollice I[u]dum'; 2^r mid: 'Iuvenalis sciens domus secreta vo[ca]t atque in timeret'; 2^r bottom: 'Tullius tales enim nos putamus ut iure laudemus'.

70 Paris, BnF lat. 12387 (formerly Saint-Germain latin 888), thirteenth century; Holmberg, 'Die altfranzösische übersetzung', p. 31.

71 Alard de Cambrai, *Livre de philosophie et de moralité*, ed. by Payen, p. 12.

72 Jung, 'A propos de la moralité', p. 495.

classical knowledge in the form of florilegia did not fall out of fashion until the early modern period.

Moral Philosophy and the Knowledge of the World

As vernacular teaching became more widespread and its audience more learned or of higher social status, the texts became more thoroughly structured and the treatment of topics more hierarchical. While initially this may have been especially the case for translations and adaptations of Latin texts, increasingly, vernacular authors dedicated much more thought to the structure of their works, aiming for a comprehensive treatment of morality in the context of a greater knowledge of creation.

The first attempt in this direction, combining systematic treatment of morality with a side of natural philosophy, cosmology, and an overview of different kinds of knowledge, is transmitted in *Der Welsche Gast*. As early as 1215/1216, Thomasin composed his book in ten parts (*teile*), making use of a scholastic schema for dividing his material. Each book is subdivided into several chapters (*capitel*) which are in turn subdivided into several paragraphs (*liumt*). In the description of the content, which precedes the text in many manuscripts and was composed by the author himself, Thomasin says he aimed for an ideal scheme of 10–10–10, though he admits that he did not succeed.⁷³ However, the attempts at structural and numeric coherence are just as symptomatic of the new developments in vernacular didactic writing as Thomasin's explanation of the contents.⁷⁴ Most manuscripts indicate this hierarchy by rubricating at least the ten parts; the category *buoch* also coincides with the codex: *Der Welsche Gast* is generally transmitted on its own.⁷⁵ Of the two redactions, the latter introduces the description of contents and its manuscripts mark the transition between chapters and paragraphs much more coherently by rubricating the transitional formulas and inserting large initials at the beginning of each new part, marked with the letters A–K above the text; adding Roman numerals for chapter counts; and indicating new paragraphs with red decorations on the first letter.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, the manuscripts of the earlier redaction indicate transitions by lombards, decorative letters smaller than

73 Thomasin von Zircklaere, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert: 'Ditze buoch ist geteilet in zehen teil | und ein ieglich teil hat sinu capitel. | Etlich teil hat zehen capitel, | etlichz mer, etlichz minner, | unde ein ieglich capitel hat sinen liumt, | etlichz vil, etlichz lutzel' (Prosavorrede 3–8).

74 Palmer, 'Kapitel und Buch', p. 69.

75 The only copies are transmitted in collections, all of them late medieval, and in one a later hand has added a brief text on table manners on a fly leaf (Schlierbach, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 28).

76 Schanze, *Tugendlehre*, pp. 13–14. The second redaction is represented by Ms Botha, Cod. Memb. I 120.

initials, independently of the structural level.⁷⁷ These additional elements that emphasize the structure of the work were probably introduced by Thomasin himself. They indicate that Thomasin expected not only a reading reception but that readers would find it easier to navigate the book via these aids. The influence of scholastic learned knowledge is evident in his structure.

Apart from the material, structural, and paratextual elements, *Der Welsche Gast* also displays its ambition of including a comprehensive corpus of knowledge in its contents. The practical precepts for young people and lords in Parts One and Two are later embedded in a fuller treatment of the virtues, which uses the triad of *maze*, *reht*, and *milte*, with *staete* as a guiding principle to which Thomasin connects not just all virtues but also the order of the world. This results in a cosmology aligned with a salvation history in which *staete* is the natural condition of divine order. Only mankind, due to the Fall, violates this order.⁷⁸ In deriving the concept of *staete* from his cosmology Thomasin embeds his ethical system in a natural philosophy that is known from the later School of Chartres.⁷⁹ The concept of *reht* is similarly connected to cosmology and salvation history. The semantics of Middle High German *reht* are broader than that of *iustitia* and also encompass social and divine order, which has particular implications for Thomasin's discussion of social stratification and the legitimation of lordship. The cosmological and historical foundation is supplemented by a systematics of knowledge in Part Seven. This does not quite create a comprehensive, encyclopaedic summary of the knowledge of creation but the ambition to connect several categories of knowledge and embed ethics in a broader canon of sciences becomes clear.

Vernacular versions of *imago mundi* come into existence by the second half of the thirteenth century, initially as translations of Latin forerunners. The title was first used in Honorius Augustodunensis's book of natural philosophy and theology from 1120. The metaphor refers back to notion of the book of nature which, together with the books of Scripture, enables man to come closer to an understanding of God, according to Augustine. This idea of presenting creation in a book, often together with theological material, makes this title popular for encyclopaedias (along with the *speculum*, which refers to the same concept).⁸⁰ The most comprehensive

77 Starkey assumes that this indicates a reading reception as they mainly serve as a tool to the performer (*A Courtier's Mirror*, p. 44). This assumption is disputed by Schanze, *Tugendlehre*, p. 14. For a comparison of the paratextual elements in both redactions see Schanze, *Tugendlehre*, p. 16.

78 Thomasin von Zircklaere, *Der Welsche Gast*, ed. by Rückert, part II, ll. 2177–82.

79 Huber, 'Der werlde ring und was man tuon und lassen schol. Gattungskontinuität', p. 197.

80 See also Conrad von Megenberg's *Buch der Natur*, ed. by Luff und Steer. For a discussion of the structures of medieval encyclopaedias, see Meier, 'Grundzüge der mittelalterlichen Enzyklopädik', pp. 476–500.

Latin encyclopaedia was compiled by Vincent of Beauvais as the *Speculum maius*, which included the Mirror of Nature, the Mirror of History, and the Mirror of Doctrine. It became the most influential model for this rising genre.⁸¹ We are already familiar with *speculum* metaphors, which aimed to offer a corrective image and frequently conveyed moral instruction.⁸² Titles such as *Imago mundi* and *Speculum maius* reflect the ambition to include not just moral philosophy but knowledge of all creation, which would in the early modern period be captured by the term ‘encyclopaedia’. By the mid-thirteenth century, vernacular authors likewise aimed to be exhaustive.

Gossuin de Metz originally wrote his *Image du monde* in Latin in 1246, and later translated it into French octosyllabic couplets. It contains a description of creation, the Earth and the universe, an account of the *artes liberales*, and a cosmology; the second part comprises a geographical description of a number of places, including their fauna, and the third part combines historical passages with some fantastic elements that Gossuin found in his sources. The French text was even more popular than the Latin one, which indicates that it was read by laymen and clerics but was not for academic study. It is transmitted in sixty-eight manuscripts, was rendered in prose (probably by Gossuin himself), put in verse again, translated into other languages, including Hebrew, and finally translated into English by William Caxton in 1480.⁸³ The thirteenth-century *volgarizzationes* of *clergie* (learned knowledge) demonstrate not only the great interest on the part of the laity in expanding their knowledge of the world but also the commitment of learned authors to teaching this knowledge. The prologues of such works address lay readers, and include the same *topoi* as the moral-didactic texts: Gossuin explains that knowledge of creation can lead to spiritual insight into the divine and thus aid the individual’s endeavour to reach salvation.⁸⁴ Gossuin leaves the door open for expansion. He himself redacted the work at several times.⁸⁵ Just like Alard and Thomasin, the authors of the *livres de clergie* (as these early ‘encyclopaedias’ are often called by the authors themselves), Gossuin indicates the structure of his work in the prologue to guide the reader though the

81 Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum quadruplex*; Aerts, Smits and Voorbij, ed., *Vincent of Beauvais and Alexander the Great*.

82 The *Tugendspiegel* uses this metaphor as much as the *Speculum regum*; see Chapter I.1.

83 Gossuin de Metz, *L’image du monde*, ed. by Connochie-Bourgne; cf. Caxton’s *Mirror of the World*, ed. by Prior.

84 Gossuin de Metz, *L’image du monde*, ed. by Connochie-Bourgne, ‘apprendre cele clergie | dont mieux vaudra tout sa vie’ (teach such learned knowledge by which one could better live their life); Connochie-Bourgne, ‘Ordonner les éléments’, p. 336.

85 Connochie-Bourgne, ‘Ordonner les éléments’, p. 338.

book. He insists that the book be read from the beginning to the end because 'l'acquisition de savoir est progressive'⁸⁶

This indicates a conscious consideration of the presentation and order of the material in the encyclopaedic work, which we can find as well in other popular *livres de clergie* from the thirteenth century,⁸⁷ such as Latini's *Trésor*. This work is particularly interesting for our study as it embeds moral education in its canon of essential political knowledge. Where Gossuin aimed to offer a comprehensive knowledge of the world for the sake of understanding it, Latini's final aim is good government, and the order in which he presents the wisdom in his book expresses this. The structure of the book is introduced in the metaphor that also gives the book its title. Latini offers a treasury (*trésor*) in which the statesman can accumulate knowledge like riches, not just for the pleasure they bring but for their potential to expand and secure his power and position and their capacity to realize good intentions.⁸⁸ Latini explicitly refers to his book as a compilation, but his pride in his own work derives from the arrangement of the collected knowledge, as becomes evident in his use of the *accessus*-scheme that forms part of his introduction.⁸⁹ The metaphor of the treasury also dictates the structure of the work and the reading order, which (as in the *Image du Monde*) is supposed to follow the arrangement of the work supplied by Latini. The 'treasury' contains, in the first book, coins: a universal and natural history of the world. The second book contains precious stones: ethics and knowledge of good conduct, which like jewels will beautify a person and bring joy. The third book represents gold and transmits rhetoric, which to Latini is the essence of good government.

Et si come sens deniers n'auroit nulle moieneté entre les heuvres des gens [...], que adreçast les uns contre les autres, autresi ne puet nus home savoir des autres choses pleinement se il ne set ceste premiere partie dou livre. La seconde partie, qui trace des vices et des vertus, est de precieuses pieres, qui donent a home delit et vertus. [...] La tierce partie dou tresor es de fin or, c'est a dire que ele enseigne a home a

86 Connochie-Bourgne, 'Ordonner les éléments', p. 341.

87 For example, the *Livre du Sydrach*; cf. Ruhe, 'Stratégies de la transmission de savoir'.

88 Brunetto Latini, *Tresor*, ed. by Beltrami, I. 1. 1: 'Cis livres est apielés Tresors; car si come li sires qui vuet en petit leu amasser de grandisme vaillance, non par por son delit seulement, mais por acroistre son pooir et por essaucier son estat en guerre et en pais, i met li les plus chieres choses et le plus precieux joiaus que il puet, selons sa bone entencion, tout autressi est li cors de cest livre compilez de sapience', (This book is called the treasure, for just as the lord who wishes to amass things of great value, not only for his own pleasure but to increase his power and elevate his status in war and peace puts into his treasure the most precious jewels he can gather together according to his intention, in a similar manner the body of this book is compiled out of wisdom like the one which is extracted from all branches of philosophy in a brief summary; trans. by Barrette and Spurgeon).

89 Discussed in detail in Maier, 'Cosmo politicus', pp. 335–42.

parler selon la doctrine de rethorique. [...] [L]a tierce science, ce est politique, qui enseigne coment hom doit gouverner la cité.

(Just as without coins there is no connection between the works of men, which are coordinated with each other, so no man can truly know of other things if he does not know the things of this first book. The second part, which deals with the sins and virtues, is of precious stones that give men joy and virtue. [...] The third part of the treasure is fine gold, which signifies that it teaches how a man shall speak according to the rules of rhetoric. [...] The third part is politics which teaches how one should govern the city.)⁹⁰

The practical science of moral philosophy serves the ultimate aim of ensuring good government in Latini's treasury of knowledge. The metaphor of the treasury evokes a notion that is quite different from a *speculum* or *image du monde*. Knowledge of the world is not just collected and presented as is; the book does not just reflect what the sensory world has to offer to the learner. In the treasury, knowledge acquires a specific value and at the same time becomes a *moieneté*, a currency (lit. 'intermediary') used to acquire additional values. Morality is no longer taught for its own sake but becomes a necessary part in a greater systematic acquisition of knowledge that in itself serves a specific aim.

Latini's approach of evaluating and selecting knowledge, compiling it, and adding value to it by giving it a frame and a structure does not just facilitate the reception of learning but categorizes knowledge in entirely new ways. The encyclopaedic ambition begun here continues the traditional practice of moral-didactic writing in many ways as — for example, authorities are still important and the contents transmitted are long established — and yet it gives the acquisition of knowledge a new purpose.

The manuscripts of the encyclopaedias in general and the *Trésor* specifically offer additional guidance to aid their reception. Rubrics were systematically transmitted in these works as were tables of contents. Chapter headings, diagrams, and initials guide the reader and allow them to find a specific place in the book. Summaries demonstrate the pedagogical principles. The ideal reader allows the author to guide their reading via the paratext and thus learns the work's contents in the intended order. However, we know from traces of this reception that readers were much more active than that and consulted specific passages more frequently according to their interests. A reader of the *Livre du Sidrach* has marked in the table of questions at the beginning of the book all questions that related to women — research guided by genuine interest is, after all, the best guarantor for understanding and memorizing knowledge.⁹¹ However,

⁹⁰ Brunetto Latini, *Tresor*, ed. by Beltrami, p. 634.

⁹¹ Connochie-Borgne, 'Ordonner les éléments', p. 347.

the author does not always incite adequate interest in his reader: in a section on natural history in a *Trésor*-manuscript, a fourteenth-century hand has added the word *Ennoiez* in the lower margin.⁹² Readers brought their own interests to their reading; following the prescribed order was not always the best option.

The Codex Speaks

The development of medieval encyclopaedias influenced not only the contents of moral-didactic works and the arrangement of their teaching, but also the presentation of codices, too. At the same time, the wider readership of vernacular literature in the thirteenth century and the greater esteem these languages had gained can be seen in the apparatus of the material medium in which they were transmitted. Manuscripts commissioned by or dedicated to rich patrons were beautifully decorated and thus enhanced the prestige of the texts they transmitted. It seems that in some cases the authors themselves took an active interest in the appearance of the manuscripts and used illustrations to aid its didactic objective. In the following discussion, we will see how illustrations and diagrams were used to guide reception, enhance didactic value, and create unity in a diverse corpus of knowledge while, at the same time, reflecting the new appreciation of knowledge in a lay readership.

Guiding Reception

The encyclopaedic approach to structure, systematics, and completeness is reflected in the codicological transmission on several levels. Though moralistic writing can be transmitted with a variety of texts, from courtly romance to sermons, some codices show a conscious attempt to combine texts according to a certain systematic. BnF français 1822 originally collected the works of Jofroi de Waterford and it includes a table of contents that allow the reader to find specific sections of the *Secré de secrés*. The codex BnF Arsenal 3516 appears, at first glance, to be a heterogeneous collection of texts, but Claudia Guggenbühl has shown that it actually consists of three thematic units that build upon each other. The foundation is laid by a collection of religious texts, including excerpts from the Old and New Testaments, the Passion, saints' lives, and eschatology.⁹³ The second unit consists of scientific texts, including a *mappa mundi*, the *Image du Monde* and a short poem on the Nature of Time, the *Livre*

⁹² Turin, Biblioteca universitaria, L III 13, fol. 22^v.

⁹³ Guggenbühl, *Recherches sur la composition et la structure du ms. Arsenal 3516*, pp. 268–70.

de philosophie et de moralité, followed by bestiaries and lapidaries.⁹⁴ The third unit contains courtly literature: historiography, romances, *lais*, some didactic texts, such as the *Doctrinal Sauvage*, and poems by Robert de Blois.⁹⁵ Structurally similar to the *Trésor*, this collection proceeds from instruction in the basics of Christian knowledge to knowledge of the world and onto the refinement of manners and the knowledge that would be useful and interesting for a lay noble audience. The placement of the *Livre de philosophie* is a logical consequence of the contents of the previous works. The *Image du monde* transmits the knowledge of the ancient philosophers on the nature of the world, while the *Livre de philosophie* transmits their knowledge on the morality of mankind.⁹⁶

The *Livre de philosophie* is included into the scientific section not just because of its moral content, which would qualify it for the courtly section, but owing to its method and the authority of its sources. While Alard de Cambrai does not retain the dialectic structure of the *Moralités des philosophes*, his approach is systematic and scientific: the words of the philosophers are first quoted (in the manuscripts they are set off with red rubrics), then explained with accompanying examples, and then summarized again in other words. This method of interpretation, along with the work's encyclopaedic character, prompted the compiler to include it in the scientific section.

The structural unity of Arsenal 3516 is emphasized yet again by a table of contents (fol. 3^v), which follows a calendarium. Tables of contents become increasingly common for scientific and educational texts in this period. They bear out the idea of a reception that does not simply proceed in a linear fashion but permits selective reading and re-reading of interesting sections. Together with paratextual elements such as rubrics, some decorative elements have a structural function, too, and enable an easier navigation of the codex by indicating the beginning of a new text. Initials in different sizes differentiate beginnings of new chapters from beginnings of new works. These elements are well known from Latin learned literature. In codices that transmit scientific writing, visual aids to navigate the codex are typically simple and seldom elaborate. As vernacular writing was in the ascendancy as the preferred medium of learning for lay patrons, manuscripts are increasingly illuminated and in their decoration structural elements and didactic purpose enter a complex interrelation.

94 Guggenbühl, *Recherches sur la composition et la structure du ms. Arsenal 3516*, pp. 272–77.

95 Guggenbühl, *Recherches sur la composition et la structure du ms. Arsenal 3516*, pp. 279–80.

96 Guggenbühl, *Recherches sur la composition et la structure du ms. Arsenal 3516*, p. 276.

Text and Image

Medieval moralizing authors were certainly aware of the didactic potential of images, in particular for the instruction of the laity. A famous dictum of Gregory the Great was widely known among learned authors: 'Nam quod legentibus scriptura, hoc idiotis praestat pictura cernentibus, quia in ipsa ignorantes vident quod debeant, in ipsa legunt qui litteras nesciunt' (What writing does for the literate, a picture does for the illiterate looking at it, because the ignorant see in it what they ought to do; those who do not know the letters read in it).⁹⁷ Scholars have disputed the precise meaning of Gregory's dictum as well as the use of imagery in medieval writing, and concluded that images fulfilled many more functions besides merely conveying the basics of the doctrine to the unlearned⁹⁸ — in fact, they often failed to achieve this purpose. Images had to be 'read' in order to be understood in a way not dissimilar to the reading of text itself.⁹⁹ In didactic writing, images could serve a number of purposes: among other things, they could help the reader 'envision' complex subject matters,¹⁰⁰ serve as *aide-mémoires*, or direct the reader's attention.¹⁰¹ Their function in a specific manuscript can only be deduced when images and texts are analysed together, taking into consideration factors such as didactic function, intended audience, context of reception, the content and complexity of the teaching, but also the materiality of the codex and other texts it transmits.

The simplest form of text–image relation that we find in didactic manuscripts occurs in connection with the decoration of the writing. Most manuscripts sport at least simple flourishes on coloured initials and decorative text frames, and sometimes little images are added: small heads in the initials, a dragon or a hunting scene in the decorative frames that occasionally surround the writing. Often, these images have no direct connection to the content, but may run through the entire codex and thus create unity and structure. They valorize codices and texts and can enhance their appeal to a specific readership. From these images, it is just one step further to historiated initials with a connection to the text whose beginning they mark in the codex. Illuminations that mark a beginning by taking up a recognizable scene or personality from the text can also precede a text in an illumination that can be as big as the column of

97 S. Gregorii Magni *registratum epistularum libri VIII–XIV*, ed. by Norberg, xi. 10. Translation in *Selected Epistles of Gregory the Great*, trans. by Barmby, pp. 53–54.

98 Cf. Duggan, 'Was Art really the "Book of the Illiterate"?'.

99 Mostert, 'Reading Images and Tests'.

100 Müller, *Visuelle Weltaneignung*, p. 127.

101 A collection of studies by Jean-Claude Schmitt offers a cultural history of the image in the medieval West; see Schmitt, *Le corps des images*.

text or expand across the entire width of the folio. They might show the author of the text, with or without the patron or dedicatee. Sometimes, running motifs show a similar image across many different manuscripts of the same text. Most manuscripts of *De regimine principum*, for instance, depict Giles of Rome passing on his work to his patron, Philip IV.¹⁰² With this reference, the image adds prestige and authority to the text. The iconic image is varied in a manuscript containing the translation by Henri de Gauchi, which depicts instead Charles V, who commissioned the vernacular version.¹⁰³ According to Briggs, this scene was possibly based on a lost Latin original presented to Philip, where it would have functioned as author and owner portrait at the same time, a function it fulfils again in the French copy made for Charles V. In another manuscript, the book is presented to the king by Aristotle, with the figure of Giles in the background.¹⁰⁴ Similar as this may seem to the former composition, it refers to the Aristotelian thought that runs through the book rather than to the work of compilation and commentary done by Giles. It also draws on the prestige of the great philosopher, who takes centre stage here. This constellation, however, appears in only one other manuscript, so we can assume that Giles's authorship did indeed carry enough weight for him to be represented in the illumination: in at least nine manuscripts, he is even depicted alone.¹⁰⁵

If these illuminations are to help the reader navigate the codex and find a specific text, they must be informed by a relatively stable pictorial representation. Giles is marked as an Augustinian by his habit, but nothing of the content can be found in the images. The illuminations that precede the *Moralitez des philosophes* in some manuscripts instead refer to the scene described in the prologue of the work, in which the author dreams of an encounter with the great philosophers whose wisdom he has collected in the work. Accordingly, a number of French manuscripts depict a sleeping figure and several other figures standing next to his bed, dressed as learned men and clerics. Manuscript BnF naf. 6883, fol. 68^r and BnF fr. 24429, fol. 34^r show two philosophers by the bed and a group of monks behind them (Figure 1). The *Image du Monde*, which precedes the *Moralitez* in the former codex, is likewise introduced by illuminations that permit the reader to identify the text: fol. 1^r displays three images, which together cover the upper part of the folio, displaying on the left Christ holding a T-Model globe, flanked by the evangelists, in the middle a *mappa mundi*, today largely rubbed off, and on the right the author in a scriptorium,

102 Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum*, p. 32.

103 Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum*, p. 32; Besançon, Bib. mun. 434.

104 BnF français 19920, fol. 2^v. For the image type of Aristotle, see Sherman, *Imaging Aristotle*, p. 42.

105 Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum*, pp. 35 and 59.

dressed as a cleric, writing the book. The Apocalypse, which follows the *Moralitez*, is introduced by the figure of God, seated, holding the crucified Christ before him. It is clear that the illuminations have been chosen to distinguish the texts the codex contains. In a similar fashion, BnF français 1166 contains miniatures at the beginning of each text that refer to the content of the text, displaying the same scene of the sleeping author described above. This image is quite stable across the manuscripts of the French translation, while nothing similar can be found in the Latin manuscripts.

The Turin codex of Latini's *Trésor* opens with an quarter-page illustration of God and the twelve apostles, the globe that illustrates the division of the world into three geographical regions is held by an angelic figure, the sections on natural history display illustrations of animals as we know them from bestiaries, and the beginning of the moral instruction opens with a scene of a teacher, reading from a book to two students.¹⁰⁶ This illumination makes a general reference to the didactic function of the text, while BnF français 12581 identifies the specific text by depicting a large chest (fol. 90^v), thus evoking the treasury metaphor.

In these codices, the images help us identify the texts in the codex. In other cases, by contrast, their purpose seems to be to create unity. BnF Arsenal Ms 5201 is a richly decorated codex with gilded initials and several larger-scale historiated initials. The layout and design of the codex is mostly uniform, apart from a few missed rubrics and different layouts for verse and prose texts. The book contains religious, historical, and moral-didactic writing. The beginnings of some texts are marked by large historiated initials that refer to the content of the text: pagina 73a shows God and a crucified Christ and introduces the poem *De la Trinité*; p. 97b shows the Annunciation which is the subject of the text that follows. Others are marked only by small gilded initials that are elsewhere used for chapter beginnings or other in-text distinctions. It is not always clear which texts merit an illuminated initial and which texts do not. Both the *Distiques de Caton* (p. 173a), the French pseudo-Cato translated by Adam de Suel and the *Moralitez* (p. 371) bear illuminated large-scale initials, the former depicting the master Cato teaching a group of students, the latter indicated by the familiar dream scene with the philosophers. Three illustrated smaller initials within the *Moralitez* indicate the beginnings on the chapters on 'porvoiance' (p. 373, foresight), 'desgart' (p. 375, unguardedness), and 'soffrance' (p. 387, patience). The *Doctrinal Sauvage*, however, begins with a smaller gilded initial with no reference to the text (p. 184a: it contains a little dragon). Since the texts in the codex are written continuously one after the other, sometimes even beginning mid-column,

¹⁰⁶ Turin, Biblioteca universitaria, L II 18, fols 1^r, 46^v, and 65^v respectively.



Figure 1. Philosophers standing by the bed of the dreaming author, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS nouvelles acquisitions français, 6884 fol. 68^r. Thirteenth century. Reproduced with permission of the BnF.

the distinction between the individual texts often blurs. Instead, the decoration is evenly dispersed across the codex with the first page standing out as particularly embellished. The purpose seems to be an aesthetic one that also ties the individual texts together to create an integrated whole.

In other cases, images establish the communicative programme of the texts and create a relationship with the audience. We have already seen that the illustration in the Dessau manuscript of the *Magezoge* relates to



Figure 2. Master and disciple in conversation, Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, MS Cod. Pal. germ. 389, fol. 10^v. c. 1256. Reproduced with permission.

its new readership, as the codex was copied for a nunnery: the image depicts a seated nun who teaches a girl kneeling before her.¹⁰⁷ The full-page images that accompany each text in the Codex Manesse were meant to be author portraits. *Winsbecke* and *Winsbeckin* are depicted in conversation with their respective tutees, son and daughter. Their right hands are raised in a gesture that indicates the three final precepts they give in the poem, thus distinguishing the didactic texts from, for instance, the love poems transmitted in the book. While the images take up an important element from the text, they form no integral part of the teaching and occur only in a single manuscript.

The first moral tract that included illustrations in the didactic programme proper was *Der Welsche Gast*. The programme of illustrations was probably designed by the author himself, and almost all manuscripts

¹⁰⁷ Dessau, Landesbücherei, Hs. Georg. 24.8°, fol. 67^r.

transmit the illustrations or leave space for them to be filled in.¹⁰⁸ One of the 125 images in the manuscripts of *Der Welscher Gast* very much resembles the illustration that precedes the poem *Der Winsbecke* in the Codex Manesse:¹⁰⁹ the corresponding images in the *Welscher Gast*-manuscripts are embedded in the passage in the poem in which Thomasin recommends young people follow the example of the 'wise man' (Figure 2). The depiction is the same in all manuscripts: the wise man, dressed in a robe and wearing a beard, is illustrated in a seated position with a well-dressed young man standing facing him. The old man has his right hand raised in a deictic gesture with the index finger extended. The figures are described in the images as *der wise man* and *der juncherre*. The illustrations clearly show a teaching scenario, with the older man pointing to something. Next to him is a banderole bearing the words *ich siehe ez wol*. The little scene may be read deictically: the wise man conveys his 'insight' in 'pointing it out' to the young man, reacting to the question the latter asks in his banderole: *Sit ir der meister?*¹¹⁰ At this point in the text itself (in some manuscripts the young man is actually pointing at the corresponding text), the young man's question becomes a question about the man's qualities as a role model: can he be used as a model? Is he '*biderbe*', (good)? Thomasin explains in the text that one should *volge dem man der bezzer ist ze sehen an denn ze hoeren*, referring to a visual judgement. What is meant by this is clearly that deeds should be taken as a measure of excellence, rather than mere words, but nonetheless the link to the visual is there. Taken together with the passages about the instructive character of images I mentioned above, the close connection between text and image in the *Welscher Gast* becomes clear. While in *Der Winsbecke* the image precedes the text and covers the whole of one folio, in *Der Welsche Gast* the images are inserted into the text, accompanied by subtitles, explanations, and banderoles with fragments of dialogue: text and image belong together, the images do not work without the writing, and the text makes reference to the illustrations. Wenzel concludes that the illustrated manuscripts are bi-medial and combine textual and visual strategies of visualization, integrating the viewer into the medium as an eyewitness.¹¹¹ In this vein, Starkey has listed several ways

108 All illustrated manuscripts are digitized on Welscher Gast Digital (<http://wgd.materiale-textkulturen.de/illustrationen/index.php>). Fourteen out of twenty-four transmitted manuscripts include illustrations, including the oldest (Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 389); another four leave space for them.

109 The *Welscher Gast Digital* project lists 125 images. Some of them are transmitted in only one manuscript, others in up to thirteen. The image referred to here is number 15.

110 Wenzel uses this and other scenes in the manuscript illustrations to demonstrate the close connection between saying and pointing/demonstrating in the *Welscher Gast*, which is not only visible in the connection between text and image but also in the use of vocabulary associated with seeing. 'Sagen und Zeigen', pp. 16–27.

111 Wenzel, 'Sagen und Zeigen', p. 28.

text and image can be 'read'. A reader might peruse a passage, the end of which is indicated by rubricated initials, and then look at the image in the context of what he has just read. He might try and interpret the image with the help of the banderoles and labels, and then read the passage associated with it. The reading process could also be interrupted to examine an image and oblige the reader to find his place in the text again. A reader could also decide to 'read' and regard only the images.¹¹² In any case, 'the images' placement encourages him to view them on their own terms and not as contingent on or subordinate to the text'.¹¹³

The image in the Codex Manesse of *Der Winsbecke* does not serve as instruction but merely illustrates the text. It depicts a face-to-face moment of instruction as implicit in the text, which is also alluded to in the described image of the *Welscher Gast*. The full-page illustration can be held up and shown to an audience which listens to someone reading the text, whereas the images in *Der Welscher Gast* are there for a reader to look at them and use them to navigate through the text.

Diagrams

The rise of encyclopaedias influenced the teaching of morality in content and by framing it as part of a systematic knowledge of the world, but they also had an impact on the presentation of moral philosophy in the codices that transmitted it. Diagrams, though they had been in use since antiquity, gained a new popularity and were widely used in vernacular texts, too, from the twelfth century onwards.¹¹⁴

The manuscript BnF Arsenal 3516 transmits the *Livre de philosophie et de moralité* by Alard de Cambrai directly after Gossuin de Metz's *Image du monde* and a short text called *La Nature du Temps*. All three texts have the same layout (four columns with an average of fifty lines each), which in the case of the *Image* is sometimes interrupted to make space for the numerous diagrams that accompany Gossuin's cosmology. These diagrams vary in size and complexity: some are very simple and only as wide as the columns (e.g. fols 165^r, 165^v); others cover about a third of the width of the folio (e.g. fols 171^v, 172^r, 173^r), in which case the text is arranged in only three columns to accommodate the diagrams; and still others are almost as wide as the section of the folio covered in writing (e.g. fols 179^r and 179^v). All the diagrams are round in shape and their

112 Starkey, *A Courtier's Mirror*, p. 45. While Starkey places the *Welscher Gast* between orality/aurality and literacy, she argues that the manuscript she focuses on in her book, Gotha Memb. I 120, was prepared for a reading reception.

113 Starkey, *A Courtier's Mirror*, p. 45.

114 On the developments in diagrammatics in the twelfth century, see Meier-Staubach, 'Die Quadratur des Kreises'.

size and complexity increases as the manuscript progresses. Two full-page diagrams are placed after the explicit of the *Image* (fol. 179^r) and before the *La Nature du Temps* (fol. 179^v) and are much more embellished than the smaller ones (see Figures 3 and 4).

The form and size of these diagrams are related to their function: they are round because they display the cosmos, its spheres and bodies, and astrological phenomena (such as lunar eclipses). Here, diagrams are scientific models of bodies that were understood to be circular, such as the planets. Other diagrams were circular to echo the intellectual idea with which they were connected. A half-page diagram on fol. 179^r displays the month of the year and the seasons (Figure 3). There is no inherent reason to arrange this in a circular fashion, when a table, for example, could have served that purpose, but the circle indicates the cyclic continuity and facilitates the arrangement of the elements in the diagram in a way that indicates completeness: the circle is the perfect form, nothing can be added or taken away from it, and it can (and does) contain in itself further circular elements. In the outer circles are the months of the year. The word 'annus' (year) is written in the circle in the centre of the diagram. Four larger circles placed left, right, top, and bottom group together the cardinal points, the humours, the seasons, the elements, and the four ages of man. Their outer circles contain the signs of the zodiac. They are connected with one another by red lines indicating that they are held together in pairs by one of the four properties (e.g. 'siccitate conveniunt').¹¹⁵ The smaller circles in between list the number of months, weeks, days, and hours in a year.¹¹⁶ Another diagram below it contains the spheres and the elements, starting from hell in the centre and moving outwards to heaven, with God ('Dieus') placed outside the circle. In this way, the diagram creates a well-ordered universe that relates cosmological, human, temporal, and natural characteristics to one another, in a concise way that would need much more text if it were written out.

The largest and most embellished diagram in Arsenal 3516, on the flipside of the folio 179^v (Figure 4), similarly contains the names of the months in the outer circles, seven inner circles corresponding to the days of the week, and a central circle which states the purpose of the diagram: 'Lisies le livre qui chi se mostre, si trouveres les natures del tans si comme Deus les a asis' (Read the book as it is shown here, so you find the nature of time as God has created it). The seven circles then refer to the section of the text to be read when Christmas falls on a specific day of the week.¹¹⁷ Here, the diagram allows the reader to navigate the text and establishes

¹¹⁵ These connectors are written in Latin whereas the remainder of the diagram, as well as all other diagrams, are inscribed in French.

¹¹⁶ Guggenbühl, *Recherches sur la composition et la structure du ms. Arsenal 3516*, p. 309.

¹¹⁷ Guggenbühl, *Recherches sur la composition et la structure du ms. Arsenal 3516*, p. 310.



Figure 3. Diagram displaying the division of the year, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Arsenal 3516, fol. 179^r. Thirteenth century. Reproduced with permission of the BnF.



Figure 4. Diagram displaying the division of the months and the week, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Arsenal 3516, fol. 179^v. Thirteenth century. Reproduced with permission of the BnF.

a spatial connection between textual elements and the order of divine creation, specifically its temporal order, which is the topic of the text. The circle is delineated by several outer lines with embellishments, so that the outer border is much bolder than the inner circles. This increases the impression of completeness. Contrary to the astronomical diagrams in the *Image du monde*, these diagrams arrange a number of disparate elements in relation to one another and establish hierarchies between them. The elements themselves are simple words or short texts, the circular structures serve to establish order between them and indicate that they form a harmonious whole. Jean-Claude Schmitt distinguished between *pictura*, *imago*, and *figura*, the latter of which serves precisely this purpose of arranging disparate elements in an analogical relation and establishing a dialectic relationship between writing and image.¹¹⁸ These large *figurae* make reference to the whole text of which they are part, rather than merely illustrating aspects of it. In this context, we can also read the diagram that accompanies the *Livre de philosophie*.

Occupying a full folio before the beginning of the *Livre de philosophie et de moralitez* (fol. 180^v, Figure 5), we find a full-page diagram similar in both form and embellishment to those on fol. 179^r and the upper segment of fol. 179^v (Figure 6). It shows a large circle containing several concentric circles, in between which other circular elements are evenly distributed. Some of these smaller roundels bear names, some were probably meant to contain names, while others seem to have been intended purely for decoration. What purpose could a diagram serve in a text that contains a collection and moralization of *auctoritates*? Unlike, for instance, a cosmological diagram that illustrates a process or a natural phenomenon, this diagram does not invite conclusions as to its purpose based solely on its design. The text it contains not only explains what it is supposed to show, it is itself the actual content. The outer circles transmit twenty names, read clockwise: 'tulle', 'salemons', 'senekes', 'teren-sce', 'lucans', 'perses', 'chicerons', 'diogenes', 'orases', 'iuvenaues', 'socrates', 'ovides', 'salustres', 'yzidres', 'aristotes', 'catons', 'platons', 'virgiles', 'macrobe', 'poetes'.¹¹⁹ Of eight circles further in, only two are filled ('boces', 'san pol'), and another group of eight still further inward is completely void of names. Assuming that the smallest ones were not meant to be filled, that leaves ten circles empty where presumably names should be written. Claudia Guggenbühl assumes that 'poetes' is a misreading of *Boethius*, as it is misspelled as 'poetes' several times throughout the text in this

¹¹⁸ Schmitt, 'Formes, fonctions et usages des diagrammes', pp. 7–9.

¹¹⁹ For 'aristote' and 'caton' I rely on the reading of Guggenbühl, *Recherches sur la composition et la structure du ms. Arsenal 3516*, p. 310. In the digitized version, the letters in these two circles are mostly rubbed off and can no longer be deciphered.

manuscript.¹²⁰ The outer circles include the *auctoritates* mentioned in the prologue, where Boethius is indeed missing. The confusion may originate in the attempt to distinguish Christians and pagans, as Isidore is the only Christian in the outer circle, but with the majority of the inner circles empty, we cannot be sure.



Figure 5. Diagram of classical and early Christian moralists, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Arsenal 3516, fol. 180^v. Thirteenth century. Reproduced with permission of the BnF.

¹²⁰ Guggenbühl, *Recherches sur la composition et la structure du ms. Arsenal 3516*, p. 310 note 83.



Figure 6. Comparison of diagrams.

Extrapolating from the diagrams discussed above, we can nonetheless infer that a hierarchical relation was meant to be expressed, with the outer circle containing the names with the highest moral authority. Given the scribal errors in the main text, it seems likely that the diagram was drawn in analogy with the earlier ones and the scribe who filled in the names disrupted the intended order by accident. This order makes explicit reference to the text, just as the diagram on the reading order of *La Nature du Temps* does. The diagram does not illustrate a natural phenomenon, but refers to further textual worlds that are summarized, structured, and explained in the *Livre de philosophie*. It serves to place its elements in a configuration that circumvents linearity and thus constructs hierarchy in a different way than in the form of text. The concentric circular form, together with the decoration, indicate completeness: the circle can symbolize divine perfection but also the cyclic nature of time.¹²¹ Placed before the *Livre de philosophie et de moralité*, it closes off the moral universe in the same way as the depiction of the cosmological spheres or the months in a year. It situates moral education alongside knowledge of the natural world, not just by transmitting it in the same codex but through its use of the same layout and the design of the diagram, making a statement about the relevance and status of both kinds of knowledge.

Less elaborate but also affirming the attempt to structure and systematize the moral teachings of the *Moralitéz de philosophes* is a simple table transmitted in BnF français 25407, fol. 122^v (Figure 7). In four columns and eight rows, the table aims to sort the individual virtues into the categories of *honeste chose*, *plus honeste chose*, *profitable chose*, and *plus profitable chose*, plus the connection between *honeste* and *profitable*. Apparently, the fact that the original distinction between honourable, useful, and their connection did not assign the same number of virtues to each category caused some trouble for the diagram artist, who was forced to include more than one element into the circles in column two and subdivide the third column several times, and finally gave up on the attempt to clearly assign the virtues to a category in the fourth column. It seems that his idea of a diagram would have worked better with a symmetrically structured treatise. He did, however, mark the section on *conseil* (counsel) separately: it was apparently important enough to break the attempt at achieving symmetry in the table and mark its place in the section on *honeste chose*. As discussed in Chapter 3, counsel was an important aspect of the teaching of the lay nobility. The diagram artist may have intended the table as a tool for navigating the text and showing the position of the individual virtues within it, as well as displaying an overview of the divisions and subdivisions established in the treatise.

121 Evans, 'The Geometry of the Mind', p. 33.



Figure 7. Diagram of the division of the virtues in the *Moralites des philosophes*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fonds français 25407, fol. 122v. Thirteenth century. Reproduced with permission of the BnF.

This circular form as indicating completion is used also in some images in Thomasin's text. They are less diagrammatic as they include personifications to denote abstract concepts (called 'synoptic types' by Briggs).¹²² Nonetheless, Thomasin uses the possibilities of spatial arrangement in the same way as geometric artists do. In a section on the nature and virtues of nobility, he places a circular image with three figures holding each other's hands (Figure 8). They are titled 'adel' (nobility), 'recht' (justice or order) and 'höfischeit' (courtliness). It is not only their hands that joins them, but also a textual explanation that runs around them in a circle: *recht tut höfischeit — adel tut recht — höfischeit tut edeliche* (justice makes courtliness — nobility makes justice — courtliness makes nobility).¹²³ The purpose of the diagrammatic arrangement of these three elements is once more to indicate wholeness, but also interdependency and equality. In each manuscript there are places in which one of them presides over the others, as in a pyramid, and their respective places in the different manuscripts varies.

Where the circle indicates completeness and can circumvent hierarchical order, the ladder is used by Thomasin and other diagram artists to indicate rank and the progression from one element to the next (Figure 9). The ladder of virtue and vice is a common type, which indicates movement from the one to the other. Evans notes that 'the ladder offered a motif that reinforced the message of the inscriptions: in these cases, moral improvement and educational progress'.¹²⁴ Thomasin used two variations of it. The vices are depicted as a mother with her children, strung behind her as if on a ladder. Four main vices (or in some manuscripts just two) are placed on the mother's lap (*trachheit, trunkenheit, leckerheit, hurgelust* — idleness, drunkenness, gluttony and lust), while other risk factors queue behind her: *gelust, adel, torscheit, name, uppecheit, macht, smacheit, herschaft, ubermuot, reichthum, gierscheit* (desire, nobility, folly, reputation, opulence, power, disgrace, lordship, hubris, wealth, greed). Though the image of the ladder is invoked by the placement of the elements, it does not indicate progression but rather a list of factors, with the four most important placed in a special position not at the top but the bottom of the image. The depiction of virtues, however, depicts a literal ladder: it begins in hell, reaches up through the world, and leads up to heaven, each rung bringing the climber closer to his destination, while the devils attempt to pull him

¹²² Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum*, p. 32.

¹²³ This can be seen, for example, in Heidelberg, UB, Cod. Pal. germ. 389 (Sigle: A), fol. 62^r; other manuscripts include a further circle that repeats this theme several times, cf. <http://wgk.materiale-textkulturen.de/illustrationen/motiv.php?m=70>.

¹²⁴ Evans, 'The Geometry of the Mind', p. 34.



Figure 8. Diagram displaying the connection of nobility, courtliness, and justice, Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, MS Cod. Pal. germ. 389, fol. 62^r. c. 1256. Reproduced with permission.

back down with long hooks that indicate factors that impede the ascent.¹²⁵ The rungs below the earthly sphere leading down to hell bear the names of the sins and are broken to depict an inexorable downfall, while those leading to heaven are the virtues: *demuot*, *milte*, *liebe*, *senft[e]*, *reht* and *farheit* (humility, charity/kindness, love, gentleness, justice, and truth). In this image, the climber depicts the individual soul and the model of the ladder indicates ascent or descent in a moral sense, which might have been pictured by the readers and authors as actual upward and downward movement. 'The depiction of the virtues as rungs on a ladder turn them into a

¹²⁵ 'Wer adel hat'; 'Wer herschaft hat', and so on (Who has nobility; who has lordship, etc.); image 87, <http://wgdmateriale-textkulturen.de/illustrationen/motiv.php?m=87>.

practical means to achieve the destination of the soul, a visual definition or re-presentation of [an] abstract idea.’¹²⁶



Figure 9. Ladder of virtues leading to heaven, Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, MS Cod. Pal. germ. 389, fol. 91^v. c. 1256. Reproduced with permission.

¹²⁶ Sherman, *Imaging Aristotle*, p. 42.

Not all of Thomasin's synoptic images worked as well as the ladder and the circle. His image of *unstaetekeit* (fickleness) is, in the older manuscripts, depicted by a male or female body that is separated into sections inscribed with opposites: *liep* — *lait*, *ja* — *nein* (love — suffering, yes — no), indicating how fickleness disrupts integrity. In some manuscripts the words are written across or next to the body, which allows them to get lost in the copying process. Some later manuscripts simply depict a person and all reference to fickleness is lost.¹²⁷ The synoptic image must work in conjunction with the text.

Text and image in didactic writing are closely connected; Thomasin's illustrations especially lose their meaning without the text. Diagrams became fashionable as a result of an interest in order and comprehensiveness. Together with other elements in the codices, they guide the reader's attention by the use of language, image, and the communication between them.

Conclusion

The newly popular works of vernacular moral instruction underwent a shift almost from the moment of their appearance. The same developments that brought about their emergence in the later twelfth century prompted changes in the way they presented their instruction in the thirteenth century. Initially, poetic language served not only to make the lessons more palatable but also to connect them to other literary experiences familiar to their audience, while at the same time drawing authority from the classical forerunners of didactic poetry. With a rising awareness of the distinctions between fact and fiction among an increasingly learned lay audience, prose emerged as a means of communicating knowledge. The value of such knowledge motivated people to conserve it: in book-form, readers could draw on this expertise many times, replacing the fleeting social experience of listening to a poetry reading. As more and more lay people were not only able to read themselves but became aware of at least the outlines of scholastic discourse, translations of key Latin texts became popular and were read by lay as well as clerical audiences. Authors could increasingly include recent developments in their content and apply scholastic models to structure their works. Their readers could follow the hierarchical structure much better than a listening audience would, and increasingly the codices included guidance to navigate the now complex educative works. Paratextual elements, illuminations, and diagrams occu-

¹²⁷ For example, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 571, fol. 21^r; Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, Cod. 37. 19 Aug. 2°, fol. 23^v; Heidelberg, UB, Cod. Pal. germ. 330, fol. 20^r.

pied a place that fluctuated between educational aids and decoration. The connection between image and text was not yet firmly established by 1300 but images become important elements as the perception of knowledge shifted. They also increased the value of the codex and thus emphasized the value of the education they transmitted. The apparatus included in the codex can indicate the readership: Latin learned texts are typically much less decorated, and if they contain diagrams, these are functional in character. Meanwhile, manuscripts in the vernacular, designed for lay readers, make full use of their structuring, didactic, and decorative elements.

By 1300, morality and good conduct had become part of a more comprehensive corpus of knowledge now available to the literate aristocracy, which contained knowledge of God and his works in the world, the natural world, history, and morality. Such knowledge was considered increasingly necessary for executing the duties of the lay nobility and these discourses all influence one another. While this meant that the clergy were no longer the sole custodians of this kind of learning, knowledge remained highly exclusive and was still intended for the reception and use of a narrowly defined group. The role of knowledge in society had changed and so had the way it was presented in books.

Conclusion

I have set out in this book to explore the teaching and learning of moral values in medieval aristocratic society in the high Middle Ages. Across geographical and political boundaries, the evidence suggests that secular elites subscribed to similar values and agreed on the same sort of behaviour as appropriate for the nobility. On this basis, I have interrogated how morality and norms of conduct were distributed both vertically, to the sons and daughters of aristocratic families, and horizontally, across north-western Europe. What role did moral education play in the lives of individual nobles and in noble society as a whole?

In order to approach those questions, I have analysed a group of sources that provide us with a rare insight into a process that took place predominantly through direct conversation — between parents and children, tutors and their pupils, masters and disciples — or, just as importantly, by immersion in a social context in which a set of norms and values prevailed and non-compliance was sanctioned. In this way, didactic writing composed for lay audiences captures parts of a discourse that left precious few traces to posterity. Texts that aimed to teach princes, ladies, knights, and courtiers about virtue and good conduct began to appear in the twelfth century in the vernacular languages. This was important as these texts aimed to supply knowledge where the absence of a learned tutor meant that Latin writing on the subject remained inaccessible, and distance from the court implied that parents could not pass on their own experience of polite society. Many texts of vernacular moral instruction thus grant us unique glimpses into the values and associated conduct of the lower ranks of the aristocracy in particular. However, the growing literary prestige of vernacular languages, especially French, meant that kings and princes also commissioned moral instruction in the vernacular, which circulated far beyond their courts. Therefore it is also necessary to ask, how did Latin texts on such topics influence the vernacular discourses?

What I have shown in this book is that morality became a central element in the discourse on nobility in the high medieval period. It provided a new foundation for the identity and legitimation of the nobility and its place and function in the divine order of the world. At a time when education was becoming more widespread among the lay elites, and in which political legitimation was frequently drawn from constructions of the continuity of lineage, as evidenced by universal histories and the

growing prestige of the antique past, moral superiority could be connected to inherited virtue among the noble families. Noble blood bestowed a greater potential for virtue, but it also implied greater access to learning. The positions of power that came with noble rank implied a duty to uphold morality, but also enhanced one's opportunities to achieve perfection in elegance of manners and inner disposition. Thus, learning morality became a marker of privilege by which nobility fashioned itself as an ideal community and legitimized its position in society.

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, we find the nobility participating in a culture of learning that was previously an almost exclusively clerical domain. A central part of this learned culture was the knowledge of virtues and how to lead a good life, in which the nobility took a particular interest as it could serve to legitimize their own place in a functional world order in which every group had a role to play. Learning about morality and good conduct helped the individual nobleman to build their own reputation and at the same time cement the elevated status of their social group. Morality and virtue became central elements in the discourse that defined nobility and the duties and privileges connected to its status, which flourished in the high Middle Ages. This revealed a considerable amount of common ground in terms of moral values across England, France, the Empire, and the Low Countries, though the discourse took a different shape depending on the political context in which it developed.

The sources in which we catch a glimpse of this discourse reflect relatively little standardization over the course of the high medieval period and are strongly tailored to their respective audiences and contexts, both in content and form. German authors are among the first to instruct their audiences in the vernacular in appropriate conduct and noble virtues. Their texts develop in complexity throughout the period, covering a larger scope of topics, and some are highly ironic and playful in tone, but the comparison with French texts makes it clear that German writers envision an audience that has little education, interested in applicable advice rather than theoretical reflections. Writers from England to the Empire, from Flanders to northern Italy emphasize that those who lead others have a responsibility to be models of virtue and morality. For one thing, the moral digressions of those in power have a much greater impact than the sins and missteps of those who are responsible only for themselves. While everyone must strive to improve and become the best version of themselves, those who have better access to moral education have a greater duty to follow it and pass it on to those of whom they are in charge. Their behaviour must serve as a model to those who are deemed less capable of moral refinement, either because they have limited opportunities to learn or because they lack the natural predisposition to virtue that presumably comes with a long line of noble ancestors. Virtue, as the combination of

morality and good conduct, is both the privilege and duty of the nobility, and enables good leadership.

This much, at least, was the consensus throughout north-western European discourse on the connection between nobility and virtues, shared across policies and the lay-clerical divide. The emphasis and repercussions of this notion could, however, differ significantly. Over the course of the twelfth century, the French kings and princes fashioned themselves as pious and learned and it became a central part of their government and legitimation. Tracts on the upbringing of noble children were produced for the royal family and circulated at the courts and schools. Kings were supposed to be learned: by association, the *chevalier lettré* became a model for the entire nobility. The francophone nobility in England used refined manners and erudition as a marker of distinction that separated them from the native English elites, and French was the language of polite society and the language in which knowledge was taught at the schools. Writings on nobility and virtue circulated and were also produced in French. The advanced administration of the Angevin government relied on learned men, so general literacy in the French vernacular was widespread at the courts in England and France.

The ambition of being learned was less pronounced among the German nobility, though some of the imperial princes were patrons of a vernacular literature, albeit one that was largely courtly or religious. Vernacular translations of Latin works of *clergie* were much less common and came into being later, mostly in monastic contexts rather than by royal commission. The moral instruction for the sons of royalty that was captured in writing consisted largely of historical examples that taught the noble lineage of their royal successors together with an account of the order of world history, including the place of themselves and their ancestors. These texts were also exclusively in Latin, which indicates that they were perhaps not studied by the dedicatee himself but rather through the mediation of their tutors. The French kings actively commissioned moral treatises in Latin and in French translations. On the one hand, this reflects the greater prestige of French as a language of learning, not just in the kingdom of France but extending south as far as Italy, west into England and north as far as the Low Countries, even in areas that belonged to the Empire. Learned texts in French became sources for other vernacular translations, which is not attested for the same kind of writing in German. On the other hand, we can see a difference between the aspects of the connection between nobility and virtue that were emphasized by French princes and those stressed by German princes. While the Empire considered itself the successor to the Roman Empire in a process of *translatio imperii*, the French claimed for themselves the *translatio studii*.

Francophone texts on the Continent generally seem to address an audience of higher rank than those produced in the German-speaking

parts of the Empire. When moral instruction in France does not address royalty, its implied audience is one that enjoys all the privileges of noble lifestyles and must be reminded not to neglect the duties that justify this lifestyle in the first place. It is concerned with the model of the *preudome*, the epitome of noble virtue, combining bravery with refinement, power with piety, learning with good manners. Its knights are noble men-at-arms in the service of God, fighting for a just cause. In German texts of the same kind, knights are more often than not perceived as lowly fighters in the service of a secular lord, to whom they owe loyalty. In these German texts, *ministeriales* and the sons of lesser nobles are taught the basic virtues that will allow them to fulfil this service in a virtuous way. The hardships they suffer in this are ennobled by their significance to the protection of the Church and their people, so that they participate in the moral superiority that their betters claim for themselves by merit of their ancestry. Other German texts give advice to young men at the courts who need to learn the specific codes of conduct that will allow them to become members of this elite community and earn reputation and favour. Those who grew up far away from the prestigious courts could not acquire this knowledge by immersion, as higher-ranking nobles would have, so didactic writing catered for this need. It was apparently felt in England, too, where such advice was offered alongside the urgent counsel to speak French well, in order to participate in courtly society. Such advice allowed the readers to integrate themselves more smoothly into the elite community of the court.

In these circles, morality served to create identity and justify the exalted position of the nobility. This coincided with vivid discussion in learned circles about the order of the world, be it the temporal order, as established in the newly popular universal histories, or the order of medieval society. These were no longer the sole domain of the clergy; lay authors addressed them in their writing and the interest of lay audiences shaped these discourses. In the aftermath of Church reforms and the Investiture Controversy, the place of nobility in the divine order was at stake: by increasing their literacy and learning, nobility claimed many of the values of the clergy and reinterpreted their function in medieval society. Elegance of manners and moral superiority were paired with the defence of Christianity both spiritually and physically as chivalry became the overarching ideology of the north-western European nobility. As clergy and nobility negotiated their respective spheres of influence, they also moved closer together through their shared access to learning, literacy, and a code of conduct. Moral instruction directed towards the nobility was not merely an enterprise on the part of the clergy to control the nobility and integrate it into the Christian value system, but increasingly a tool with which the nobility itself could use to cement its position and privileges and claim an ideological foundation that would secure its status for centuries to come.

The range of moral teaching available — from sophisticated treatises to simple maxims that could easily be applied to specific situations — demonstrates the importance of such knowledge for the different ranks, from the emperor down to the lowly knight and courtier. The availability of conduct literature in the vernacular languages enabled the lower nobility to participate in and learn the codes of conduct established at the courts and thus communicate by their behaviour that they shared this claim to moral superiority. By means of chivalry and courtliness, the nobility fashioned itself as a transnational ideal community, and access to the knowledge that conveyed its norms and values became crucial for anyone who wanted to be part of this exalted circle. The process by which this occurred was frequently reflected upon. Didactic writing describes the consequences of moral failures and breaches of etiquette, which encompass not only the prospects of the individual at court but the reputation of their family, the honour of court as a whole, and the prestige of the entire nobility. Therefore, the nobility were eager to sanction and penalize misconduct among themselves. Despite the competition at the courts that meant that one person's misstep could be turned to another person's advantage, there was a clear sense that each individual should contribute to the ideal community the court represented, and by extension to the ideal of nobility as a whole. While mutual correction was considered part of the courtly community, and of any friendship, women were also central to this process as they provided a civilizing force and an incentive for the men to demonstrate their refined manners; moreover, they were in charge of primary education and shaped the basic values of their children from an early age.

If the courts consistently fell short of this ideal, it was due to a discrepancy between outer conduct and inner life: good conduct was meant to be an expression of virtue. Codes of conduct were mostly necessary because this virtue was not sufficiently present in the nobility. However, this was a circular argument: compliance with the norms was meant to bring about virtue in the individual as it became its *habitus*. In a similar manner, courtly performance was meant to mirror the ideal order of the court that was simultaneously the creation of this very performance. The inner and the outer, the ideal and its expression, were constantly actualized in a dialectic process.

The claim to superior morality united the nobility and the higher clergy from the Empire to England. It was not just, however, the shared values and codes of conduct that created this community, but the experience of learning. For bishops, court clerics, and priests instructing the nobility became part of their own identity, as much as receiving this instruction became part of the nobility's. Access to knowledge in general became a noble prerogative they now shared with the clergy, and moral knowledge in particular took an important place in the corpus that was deemed

appropriate and relevant to the educated nobleman (and, to an extent, the noblewoman). The manner in which many moral-didactic texts are written shows how the teaching of norms and values was felt to be a deeply personal interaction that was based on and established relationships between tutor and tutee. In most literary forms, from dialogues to letters, literary sermons to collections of maxims, we can detect strategies that draw on such personal connections and aim to bridge the gap between author and audience. Only later in the period, when vernacular teaching is well established and moral teaching becomes part of a more comprehensive corpus of knowledge that is no longer meant to be adapted to a specific situation but collected and stored, do authors write in the impersonal manner that we have come to associate with educational writing — though even in these texts, their voices remain present. The variety of forms that continues to be used besides the more complex treatises and quasi-encyclopaedic books testifies to the range of situations and audiences to which didactic texts cater. The early forms do not become redundant but continue to be used until the late Middle Ages. If anything, didactic writing branches out in the period following the thirteenth century. Satirical texts show us how the teaching of norms and values was never simply taken at face value: contemporaries were alive to its inconsistencies and hypocrisy. The parody of the *Winsbecke*-poems and the tricky questions of the disciple in the *Seifried Helbling*-collection tell us that humour had its part in moral teaching. With the interventions of Christine de Pizan, female voices become more clearly visible in the discourse and by the fourteenth century, the urban bourgeois had joined the choir: the *Ménagier de Paris* instructs his wife not just in cookery and household management but invests in her moral development as well. If German was the first vernacular used for secular instruction, French was by far the most influential. By the fourteenth century, works in other vernacular languages added to the corpus of moral instruction. As English regained some prestige, having been used mainly for religious purposes from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, the fourteenth century produced several conduct poems for a lay readership, both aristocratic and bourgeois.¹ In this book, we have focused on France, England, and the Empire up to the thirteenth century because of the closely-knit textual communities that existed in these areas — writers adapted the same sources, addressed the same themes, used similar modes of teaching. As we have seen, these communities were not closed, nor were they homogenous. A number of texts circulated beyond these polities — the *Secretum secretorum* and its numerous vernacularizations being perhaps the most prominent case — and changing political and social contexts influenced which audiences were addressed, which in turn shaped the con-

¹ *How the Wise Man Taught His Son, How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter* and the Scots poem *The Thewis of Gud Women* (*The Customs of Good Women*), ed. by Mustanoja.

tents, form, and material presentation of the texts in the codices. Despite these differences, we have seen how moral education played a role in the individual lives, the shaping of nobility as a group, and the legitimation of power, and on how many levels it did so. By the end of the period covered in this book, the role of moral education and its part in the canon of knowledge was well established and so were the forms it took in writing. The greater familiarity of lay audiences with this type of learning made room for increased complexity and helped develop modes of presentation that aided a deeper understanding, such as diagrams. Morality became embedded into a more comprehensive knowledge of the world and discourses on how to live a good moral life in the world trickled down from nobility to the urban elites. This knowledge was empowering not just because it challenged the nobility and clergy's prerogative to claim moral virtue but because it allowed the individual to make good life choices without the guidance of an interpreter. The notion that each person should have access to the knowledge that allowed them to act according to their conscience inspired the Reformation and eventually the Enlightenment. However, in the medieval period and far beyond, access to moral discourses — and, by implication, autonomous ethical decision-making — remained largely limited to the upper classes. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the claim to moral superiority became a central part of the self-definition of nobility as a closed social group entitled to power. But the access to education also became a marker of belonging. Knowledge of values and codes of conduct created social capital that helped stabilize the power of the groups that could access it. The developments in moral education described in this book made sure that morality remained tied to power for centuries to come.

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